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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SELF-CONCEPT OF UNMARRIED ADOLESCENT MOTHERS

by

NEIL FRIEDENBERG

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1986

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Supervisor

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Date.....April 1986.....

Abstract

The central focus of this study involved an exploratory analysis of interpersonal communication based on individuals' needs of self-respect.

A phenomenological-existential approach was compared with a traditional positivistic perspective. The existential approach was adopted by the author as being a more appropriate device in attempting to discover the meanings that individuals bring to human relationships.

The purposes of this study were:

1. to discover themes in a description of the unmarried adolescent motherhood experience
2. to present a model of sequences as unmarried adolescent mothers change self-concept
3. to present human interactions as opportunities for individuals to reaffirm their self-worth
4. to present reality as constructed and pragmatically managed.

The subjects of this study were ten unmarried adolescent mothers who participated in a summer project designed to teach parenting and social life skills. Interviews were conducted with the mothers to discover the interpretations which they gave to specific life situations:

1. the meanings they gave to their status as *mother*
2. the meanings they gave to participating in the program, *vis-a-vis* pressure from their social workers
3. the meanings they gave to their childhood experiences,

vis-a-vis their parents, and other relevant figures.

The conclusion emphasizes specific themes as the adolescents make meaningful the events that have happened to them. The adolescents' accounts of motherhood are seen as reflecting a need for self worth. The subjects were viewed as carefully constructing self-identities. These self-identities are interpreted as being actively constructed in interactions with others. Self-identities risk being altered as a response to social environmental changes. A major determinant of any self-identity is the individual's ability to command respect from others. Five stages were presented as a model for self-concept change in the adolescent motherhood experience.

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Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	OVERVIEW	3
III.	SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY	10
	A. Symbolic Interaction Theory	12
	B. The Self in Irving Goffman's Social Psychology	18
	C. The Real Self	22
	D. Symbolic Interaction and Phenomenology	26
	E. Research Questions	29
IV.	METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	30
	A. Human Action As Problematic	30
	B. Sociological Theories of Human Action	31
	C. Existential-Phenomenological Model	33
	D. Problematic Nature of Everyday Life	35
	E. Subjects as Active Participants	36
	F. Existential-Phenomenological Accounts	36
	G. Social Existentialists and Phenomenologists	38
	H. Phenomenology and Existentialism	41
	I. Summary of Chapter	46
	J. Review of the Literature	47
V.	METHODOLOGY	57
	A. Participants	58
	B. Setting	59
	C. Procedure	59
	D. Data Analysis	61
VI.	RESULTS	62

Representative Interview 63

A. Model of Self-Concept Change For Adolescent Mothers 69

VII. DISCUSSION 78

A. Betrayal: The Loss of Trust 78

Self-Worth and Positive Relations 78

The Experience of Loss 85

Summary 86

B. Resentment: The Sense of Insult 87

The Experience of Insult 92

C. Dawning: Recognizing Inadequacy 96

D. Reconstruction Phase: Engaging the Social World 99

Interpersonal Trust 100

E. Limitations of the Study 104

VIII. CONCLUSION 107

REFERENCES 113

List Of Tables

Table	Description	Page
1.	Significant Statements and Thematic Structures.	69+70
2.	Relationship of Themes to Stages of Change in the Self-concept of Adolescent Mothers.....	77
3.	Significant Statements and Their Relations to Stages of Self-Concept Change.....	78
4.	Sequence of Self-Concept Change by Case.....	79
5.	Significant Statements and Their Relation to the Stage of Tension in Self-concept Change.....	80

I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis is presented as an existential-phenomenological analysis of the experiences of adolescent mothers in a life-skills and parenting program. An existential-phenomenological methodology is employed to clarify and describe the structures through which these adolescents experience specific phenomena: (1) trust, (2) insult, (3) inadequacy and (4) engaging the social world. A model of self-concept change is presented based on the four themes stated above.

The second chapter presents an overview of the thesis, presenting the primary considerations to be examined. Symbolic interaction theory is employed to clarify the meanings that these individuals bring to their experience.

The third chapter begins to clarify the compatibility of symbolic interaction theory with existential-phenomenological methodology. A second component of this chapter, is a discussion of the self concept as it relates to this thesis.

Symbolic interaction theory emphasises the interactional components of self-concept. This theory is congruent with the phenomenological method in their mutual emphasis upon the unity of the human experience and the world. The self as a primary concept in this thesis, is described as developing in interaction with the environment and is a function of experience rather than an abstraction.

That is, experience of the self occurs within the context of the situation. The self as it is employed as a concept in this thesis, will be the linking subject material between symbolic interaction theory and the phenomenological method.

The fourth chapter includes a discussion of methodological considerations that are pertinent for this thesis. Phenomenological method is presented as an instrument of investigation for the purpose of clarifying and describing the experiences of individuals as active participants in the world. At the conclusion of the third chapter, phenomenological method is integrated with symbolic interaction theory.

The fifth chapter is a presentation of the actual methodological procedures following a phenomenological approach designed to describe the adolescent mothers' experience.

Chapter six is a structural analysis based on the protocols. The data is discussed in terms of the structures and is basically a descriptive presentation. A model is also presented of stages in self-concept change.

The seventh chapter includes a discussion of the significance and meanings of the results in relation to the theoretical point of view. Limitations of the study and implications for further research are also presented.

II. OVERVIEW

The research orientation in this thesis has been largely guided by the work of Cowie (1976) and Levy (1981) in their study of individuals experiencing heart attacks. The significant factor of their efforts, in terms of this research, is the discovery that individuals constructed a new reality state following such a major crisis. While motherhood, the focus of the present study, is not comparable to a heart attack in terms of emotional impact, this researcher considered the events before and after the birth of children of significant importance for the adolescent that she would develop an altered self-image as a result of defining herself as a mother. While this researcher recognizes that altered reality states are a feature of everyday life, the experience of banging one's knee, for example, experiences such as heart attacks and motherhood are so far-ranging that the individual may gain a significantly different perspective of reality. As these individuals adapt to their new status, they begin to plan or construct a future that is in keeping with their new position in life.

Cowie (1976), for example, found that patients reinterpreted the significance of their heart attack as they receive information about their illnesses from hospital staff and fellow patients. By attempting to reinterpret or reconstruct their past, patients endeavour to make their attacks more intelligible, and something not "really"

threatening. In a somewhat similar manner, this researcher proposes that new mothers may attempt to normalize the difficulties they have adjusting to a new role by constructing or emphasizing a past that allows them to accept and define themselves as competent new mothers.

The choice of implementing research with adolescent mothers was especially significant because it was felt these individuals would experience greater difficulty adjusting to their new status given their youth and the general social sanction against teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood. Subjects in the present study were adolescent mothers participating in a parenting and life skills project initiated by this researcher. All of the adolescents were referred to the project by social workers or some other social service agency. Therefore, the initial assumption was that all of these subjects lacked mothering skills and were experiencing difficulty adjusting to their new status as mothers. The intent of the research was to determine whether or not there were significant stages or themes that these adolescents shared as they discussed the experience of becoming mothers, specifically as it relates to a change in self-concept.

According to the data provided by Cowie (1976) and Levy (1981) on heart attack patients, this researcher was led to believe a similar pattern would exist for adolescent mothers. Levy for example, found the following:

1. denial of illness prevented patients from co-operating

with their recovery, while accepting seriousness of illness aided other patients to recover

2. with the first signs of illness, patients attempted to ignore the event and carry on as usual
3. the patient begins to recognize the illness is of such magnitude that he or she is engaged in an entirely different reality other than that of normal everyday life
4. patients recognize that others begin to perform major decisions if that person is to survive.

Specifically, in terms of adolescent mothers, this researcher was interested in what ways the experience of adolescent motherhood may show similar themes: Do some adolescents deny the need of increased parenting and life skills? Is the transition to a motherhood self-image easily integrated into one's present lifestyle? How are other individuals involved in the adolescent's experience of motherhood?

The second major interest of this study is the changing nature of the self-concept as individuals experience life transitions. These may be as predictable as developmental stages encompassing the transition from adolescence to adulthood, or as unique as the socialization process experienced by graduate students. Goffman (1959) for example, has described the "career" of mental patients as they become socialized as mental patients and adjust to a self-concept in response to the new role. The premise of

Goffman and other social psychologists who follow the interactionist prespective of the development of self-identities (Denzin, 1977; Lofland, 1977; Gecas, 1981), is that individuals define themselves through contact with significant others. Self-concept is therefore dependent upon how we believe others are viewing us. That is, we put ourselves in their place and view our own behaviour from that position. From this perspective, self-concept is considered to be a dynamic process as individuals actively engage in seeing themselves from the position of the other (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). While self-identity has a degree of permanence, researchers such as Stryker (1970) in a study on deviance and self-concept argues for a concept of "openness", suggesting that self-concepts are tentative and are modifiable through social interaction.

Following the interactionist approach, this study was in part guided by the assumption that as the adolescent mothers in this research took on the role of the "mother", that the transition was not necessarily a simple adoption of a new role. Rather, the assumption is made that the adolescent interacts with a number of individuals during the transition and all these others will have some impact on the adolescents' self-image. Stryker for example, found youthful deviants developed self-images modified through their interaction with parents and school officials. Not all individuals in one's social environment, however, are necessarily weighted equally in the development of the

self-concept. Laing, Phillipson and Lee (1966) stress that the individual has considerable control over the self-concept, suggesting that the individual tends to choose others for whom he or she can be the self he or she wishes to be.

On the assumption that adolescent mothers will take on a modified self-concept to fit their experience as mothers and that this self-concept is in part a function of one's relationship with others, an attempt will be made to identify significant others and the nature of the relationship in determining the adolescent's self-concept. A casual observation would suggest that relationships with individuals such as boyfriends, parents, social workers, and other young mothers would play an important role in the young mother's developing self-concept. Patten (1981) for example, in a study on self-concept in adolescent pregnancy, found subject's unfavorable attitude toward themselves was based on how they perceived others to be valuing their worth.

An important consideration in analyzing the subjects' descriptions of their relationships with others is the fact that the description may be coloured by the subject's attempt to defend a present self-concept. That is, the adolescents may reconstruct or emphasize a past that in some way justifies their present self-concept. Given that the adjustment to the motherhood role is likely to be trying, it would be reasonable to expect the adolescents to attempt a

degree of stability by viewing their past relationships to fit the present situation. For example, if an adolescent mother felt incompetent as a mother, she may construe her relationship with her own mother as one in which she received very little positive role-modelling as an attempt to make her present feelings congruent with her past.

In a study on individuals moving to new geographical locations, Jones (1980) reported that these individuals retrospectively constructed the past to fit the present situation and it was this very process that was the key to the maintenance of a continuous identity in a changing situation.

The literature suggests that there is indeed a dynamic process in the managing of one's self-concept. On the one hand, due to life situational changes, the individual meets and interacts with significant others who play an important part in modifying the individual's self-concept. On the other hand, the individual struggles to maintain an existant self-concept and reconstructs past events and relationships to fit with the present self-concept to gain stability. In this present study, this researcher expects that the mothers will modify their self-concept but also justify an existing identity by emphasizing a particular past.

In summary, this research will attempt to describe the experience of adolescent motherhood. A review of the literature suggests certain developmental themes or turning points in the taking on of a modified self-concept and an

attempt will be made to describe these as they relate to the adolescent mothers. A method of phenomenological investigation will be employed in an effort to give a descriptive account of young mothers' relations with others and how these relations had an impact on the self-concept.

Finally, based upon the descriptive account of self-concept change, a model will be constructed describing the sequences of identity alteration as it relates to the subjects in this study. This model will attempt to build on that developed by Forsyth and Floyd (1981) in their study on radical conversion.

As an operational definition, self-concept is defined as an individual's affective and cognitive perceptions of himself or herself. Descriptive indicators of self-concept will be given in the chapter discussing methodology.

III. SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY

Adolescent mothers in our society have special problems in coping as adolescents and as mothers. This group often comes in contact with the helping professions. If an understanding of their experience can be gained in a phenomenological sense, then the helping professions are better prepared to help them. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a beginning for such an understanding.

In regards to this study, the term "adolescent mothers" will refer to those young women between the ages of thirteen and nineteen who are unmarried, living alone or in common-in-law relationships, possess a lower socio-economic status, and are recognized by themselves or a socia agency to be in need of parenting skills and/or general social support.

It is both revealing and perplexing to note that the results of numerous studies on the self-concept of adolescent mothers have not provided any conclusive evidence as to the level of self concept experienced by the mothers. Phipps-Yonas (1980), in a review of the current literature on teenage pregnancy, found that in recent years there are no psychological differences between girls who become pregnant and those who do not. However, Patten (1981), Zongker (1977), and Floyd and Viney (1974) found a significant difference in self-concept between the two groups.

If individuals act pragmatically and in a sense "create" themselves through experience then the presentation of that self must be "managed", that is, displayed and supported by various maneuvers. This need becomes especially important for individuals who possess some stigmatizing attribute, for example, being an adolescent mother. The need for these individuals, as it is for all of us, is to be seen and recognized as persons worthy of respect.

In light of the understanding of the problematic nature of human situations, it is not surprising that individuals are engaged in a process of constructing and reconstructing meaning. The primary objective of this study is to describe the process by which adolescent mothers develop a self-concept around their motherhood experience.

The literature on symbolic interactional processes would suggest that there is a discrepancy between what these adolescent mothers actually experience as mothers and what they publicly express as normative description. The public expression of the normative ideal of motherhood is also a function of self-worth.

The symbolic interactionist literature also suggests that the dynamics of constructing meanings and establishing self-worth are especially important for those individuals who are at risk of being publicly discredited. Those mothers who had their children apprehended were attending the program upon the advice of social service agents in order to learn parenting and social life skills. Some of these

individuals expressed that they felt criticized as mothers which led this researcher to believe they were attempting to incorporate that experience into their sense of self-worth.

This study attempts to answer the questions: How do these mothers experience motherhood? How do these mothers experience themselves in terms of self-concept?

There is an important aspect of this conceptualization of self-respect that must be recognized. Specifically, self-worth is partially dependent upon the responses of others and the meanings that we give to those responses. Interactions therefore become symbolic in terms of the created meanings for self-worth. The next section will further clarify the nature of the created self.

A. Symbolic Interaction Theory

The theoretical stance adapted for this study originated with a number of writers and academics at the beginning of this century. The theory shifts from a positivistic concern with structures and functions toward a phenomenological emphasis on process and meaning. Among sociologists studying interactional processes, it has become a popular theoretical structure. Stone and Farberman (1970) in the introduction to their book wrote:

> Symbolic Interaction will emerge as the dominant perspective of the future. Psychoanalysis, learning theory, and field theory will ultimately be laid to rest in the vast graveyard of social science theory.

While events have proved that the prediction has not been totally fulfilled, the influence of symbolic interaction

theory has been considerable, both in the analysis of institutional structures and in communication and interpersonal processes. In order to gain a deeper appreciation of the theory, in this section we will discuss the origins of the theory, its principal proponents, the basic premises and selected issues which have relevance for the study.

Symbolic interactionists believe that the world is composed of a shared, symbolic universe by individuals in concrete situations. Emphasis is given to the ways in which individuals learn to share symbols and interact with others. Meanings of events and objects, including self perception, are the result of interpreting events in some understandable manner. We define ourselves as we come into relation with others. The individual creates himself as a process in the world in everyday situations.

The purpose of symbolic interactionism is to describe and understand human life by examining the dynamic processes. As a perspective, it concerns itself with the question of meaning. Stone and Farberman (1981) present six questions that for them define the field of social psychology from the standpoint of symbolic interaction:

1. What is meaning?
2. How does the personal life take on meaning?
3. How does meaning persist?
4. How is meaning transformed?
5. How is meaning lost?

6. How is meaning regained?

Another way of stating this may be to ask, "How is reality constructed, maintained, and reconstructed?"

If reality is constructed then it must be so for a certain purpose. The symbolic interactionists maintain that the primary purpose was essentially pragmatic. Charles Sanders Peirce (1958) was the first to use the term pragmatism in stressing the fact that no reality exists as an absolute state. Being is always dependent on doing. Attention must be paid to the intent or consequences of human behavior. He described this in the following manner:

> ...in order to ascertain the *meaning* of an intellectual conception one should consider what *practical consequences* might conceivably result by necessity from the truth of that conception; and the sum of these consequences will constitute the entire meaning of the conception (Peirce, 1958, p. 61).

For Peirce, then, the meaning of objects or events may be found in the action taken toward them and their consequences, not in the behavior isolated from human intention. Furthermore, beliefs held by individuals are functional and are adjusted when they no longer play a functional role for that individual.

William James (1907) built some of his theories upon the work of Peirce. James however considered the individual's distinct experience had to be included as events are not isolated from human interpretation. Events have symbolic meaning for individuals and are given relevance according to practical considerations and meanings. They may be altered as new data and needs are

manifest. Ideas and beliefs are evaluated in terms of how successful they are in practical usage.

If individuals give objects symbolic meaning can they also give themselves symbolic meaning? Cooley's most important contribution in developing a theory of the self was to stress the social creation of the concept. He states that social life and a personal sense of who one is comes with the ability to anticipate the actions and thoughts of others. This led to his notion of the *looking-glass self*. The concept is based on the ability of the individuals to respond to their own actions as they perceive others would. Individuals gain an impression of themselves by others, they make an evaluation of their actions, and they experience an emotional reaction to this perceived evaluation. Socialization then, is an active process.

Given that individuals do invest themselves and their actions with meaning and purpose, then what constitutes the framework in which meaning is given? In 1928, William Thomas introduced his famous statement: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." With this came the idea that many interpretations are affected by the situation in which they occur, and are a result of the individual's subjective perspective. The interactionists argue to understand human events, the subjective meaning for that individual must be attained. Meaning is not given in the context of communication, but is relative, existing only in the socially structured beliefs and definitions.

This has relevance in placing the individual at center as a creator of meaning. Rather than the individual being surrounded by an environment of pre-existing objects that demand a response from him or her, the person constructs objects on the basis of his or her needs which are purposeful. Secondly, by being involved in action, the person indicates to him or herself the many things that have to be considered in the course of action.

Interactionists maintain that the self is not the same as simply a response to external forces. Individuals respond to events and are able to accept or reject, and engage in definitions according to their own needs.

This formation of action by individuals occurs in the context of social life. Social action is the result of forming an adaptation to individual lines of action. By adjusting his or her response to the actions of others, a process of interpretating others' actions is necessary, that is, forming a meaning of others' acts. This is done, according to Mead (1934), by the individual *taking the role* of the other and then responding on the basis of his interpretation of the other's actions.

Mead (1936) also contributed the notion that individuals are not solely constricted and defined by their past but rather take an active part in redefining, re-evaluating, and retrospectively reconstructing a past to make sense out of an emerging present. Mead (1938) saw the past as a process, one which we continually adjust to give

meaning to the on-going present.

In summary, symbolic interaction theory conceptualizes the individual as defining himself or herself in relationship to the environment, and as giving meaning to his or her actions as well as the actions of others. Through this interpretation of actions the experience of self develops. As individuals give meaning to themselves and the world in this active process, they are restrained by the situation in which they occur. That is, definitions of the self are partially situational. The significance of this lies in the fact that the self emerges situationally and is not an unchanging abstract concept. To understand how individuals view their selves and their relation with others it is necessary to understand the meaning of their experience.

As the object of study concerns self-concept, the following section further delineates the nature of the self in symbolic interaction theory as it pertains to this study. A preliminary statement however will serve to clarify the concept of the self.

Stone and Farberman (1981) point out the distinction between psychologists' concept of the person and that of the sociologist. The former adopt the term *personality* and the latter prefer the term *self*. For the purpose of this thesis, the term chosen by the sociologists has been adopted. Personality connotes an abstraction which has a fixed quality which is more or less consistent over time and

situations. Stone and Farberman (p. 155) argue that the inconsistency between wants, needs and conduct as an established fact is a usual occurrence and suggest that an interactionist interpretation may be more helpful than that of a fixed concept of personality.

A premise of symbolic interaction states that the self develops as a function of social processes, whereas the concept of *personality* is primarily an explanatory element in human behavior. For the symbolic interactionist, "...all conduct must be situated in a matrix of communication before analysis and explanation begin..." (Stone and Farberman, 1981, p. 156).

B. The Self in Irving Goffman's Social Psychology

The perspective employed in this study owes a great deal to the dramaturgical social psychology of Irving Goffman. A brief description of his treatment of the self provides background material to the methodology and findings presented here.

The point of departure for Goffman (1959) is the premise that when individuals interact, each desires to manage the impressions he or she causes to be received by the other. In keeping with the dramaturgical model, individuals present a *show*, complete with stage and props, which must be managed in some credible manner. Of particular importance in this model is the concept of displays made in the front region, and those activities which occur out of

the audience's sight--back stage--where rehearsals occur and discrediting material and information are concealed. The creation of the self is partially dependent on the audience's granting the other certain attributes, as well as the more substantive elements actually possessed by the individual.

Goffman gives close attention to those forms of social status. A member of a royal family, for example, may purposefully make few public appearances in order to foster the impression of a nobility which exists above the public. The noble's true feelings may be of another sort. In private, or in the back regions, he may have a circle of acquaintances with whom he engages in some activities which would serve as a disclaimer to his noble pretentions if the public were aware of it. Presentations are problematic, as individuals select from a number of possible rules and behaviors in an effort to present a convincing image. Often these strategies are not clearly understood by the participant, perhaps partly because individuals do not like to think of the presentations to others as managed. The acceptable view in our society is that one is sincere and is who he or she portrays himself or herself to be. Quite simply, social life and co-operation could not be possible if people for the most part were not what they seem. However, this does not deny the managed, performed presentations of self.

Goffman feels that because of the many demands society places on individuals, one does not have the privilege of being overly confident. In a modern society undergoing rapid social change, norms and values are changing to such an extent that the management of everyday events becomes problematic. As alienation and, in Durkheim's sense, anomie, threaten more peoples' sense of self congruence, individuals are led to treat many others and situations with a sense of caution and suspicion. The individual responds by carefully creating a presentation that will protect him from the threats and uncertainties of a problematic life. How one appears to others becomes of primary importance--to be seen as normal, to be accepted as who one presents oneself, to be treated as a person worthy of respect. Because individuals possess potentially damaging disclaimers of self-presentation, the complexity is increased. A person who presents himself as being a responsible person in control of self and situation, for example, would find his credibility questioned if it were known that he lacked control of certain bodily functions resulting from epileptic seizures, or if he had fits of rage. The necessity of back regions, where one can keep from public view potential disclaimers, becomes necessary. For example, one may retreat behind closed doors when the beginnings of a seizure occur or restrict his or her outbursts of rage to the company of others who can be trusted.

Individuals place expectations on others that their lines will be accepted and, for the most part, this is honoured as a moral obligation. Persons who purposefully and openly discredit others are not to be trusted and in turn are discredited. An unspoken agreement occurs as individuals agree to honour and protect presentations of the other. Individuals for the most part are trusted to honour and, if need be, repair the definition of the situation projected by the other.

In summary, the individual is presented by Goffman as managing certain self-presentations that will influence others to respond in certain ways. The self-presentations are analagous to masks that individuals put on while keeping hidden aspects of the self that would discredit the presentation. These self-presentations or fronts are protective devices employed by individuals in a world that is problematic and potentially threatening.

Individuals who are in some ways disadvantaged, such as the adolescent mothers in this study, are more prone to be controlled by those who possess more power. For the powerless, judicious use of self-presentation becomes even more important if they are to maintain a sense of self-worth behind the fronts they display to the powerful.

If individuals are relegated to presenting images then how can trust and sincerity be achieved in a world of manipulation and maneuvering? Is there any substance behind the mask? In the next section this issue will be discussed

as it relates to Goffman's dramaturgical model.

C. The Real Self

Goffman's notion of the self has been criticized by many who either object to his view that individuals are nothing more than a series of masks, or view that self as existing within a set of static rules.

Harold Garfinkel (1967) argues that the self is an entity which is continuously changing and obtaining credibility in interaction. In his study of Agnes, the transsexual, Garfinkel interpreted her new self as being created in everyday acts that define her presentation as a woman--men opening doors for her, helping her with her coat and offering her chairs. Garfinkel viewed the creation of a self as more problematic and situational than did Goffman who discussed the trans-situational rules for behaving.

Warren and Ponse (1977) suggested that Goffman was unnecessarily limited in his view that individuals were only the roles they performed. In their study of homosexuals, they reported that individuals purposefully portrayed a legitimate role while recognizing that their existential self risked stigmatization should it be made public.

> Certainly many gays appear to an outsider to be mere bundles of socially defined roles, but often this outsider is being taken in by front-work and masks the gay does not believe in. And certainly some gays insist that their prealteration selves were determined by generalized others (i.e., that they were then looking-glass selves), but far more certainly they are insisting that what they really are won out over the socially determined selves, largely because they chose to assert themselves

> against the social definition, regardless of the conflict and anguish involved. (p. 287).

Keeping with the existential perspective, Warren and Ponse maintain that the homosexual's assertion and choice of self is continually grounded in the person's deepest feelings.

> Feelings are the foundation of self, the source of all else. The gays reported again and again that they were unhappy, restless, alienated--without knowing why. They often felt they were searching for gratification and fulfillment, yearning, but not knowing clearly for what or why, often not conscious of the whole process, often refusing to believe what they begin to suspect from their new form of behavior. At the base of it all, pushing all else, was the complex of bodily feelings--the *body self*, the individual's brute being. (p. 288).

Edward Tiryakian (1968) is critical of Goffman's view of social reality as only composed of illusions characteristic of a social game.

> Absent from this model is the emphasis on *action* as an activity that engages the person as a moral agent, thereby differentiating him from the passivity of nonreflective organisms...The person seen as victim and/or exploiter of his social setting appears as a *pretence* rather than a *presence*....there is an interesting convergence to be noted between Goffman's approach and that of such seemingly different figures as Marx, Freud, and Sartre, since the paramount concern of each of these is the *unmasking* of social appearances. Common to all of these writers is a denigration of the person's acts as manifestations of self's volition, as exercises of the self's ontological autonomy. Goffman no less than Sartre begins with a phenomenological view of the person as a social participant, but each radicalizes this to a form of social behaviorism from which no depth analysis of the person can emerge. (p. 82).

Tiryakian recognizes the managed presentations of the self as being socially useful devices to allow the person to function freely in society while protecting the true

feelings which give direction to the presentations. This real self will be shared in private with close others.

In summary, the dramaturgical model has been criticized as presenting individuals as engaging in a few mechanical roles that they practice and put on with little emotional investment. Critics of Goffman's approach argue that behind the fronts are individuals who experience the deepest feelings.

The intent of this chapter is to discuss symbolic interaction theory and the concept of the "self" as theoretical background for the present study. Symbolic interaction theory and the conceptual development of the self within this theory have special relevance for this study.

The meanings that individuals give to themselves and the actions of others are a function of the interactions between individuals and their environment. Meanings and definitions of self, events, actions, and behaviors are problematic and are constantly being created. Human beings are not static but are constantly creating and redefining their world.

Given the problematic and uncertain nature of everyday events, individuals protect their inner vulnerability and need for self-respect by presenting calculated images or fronts. These masks allow individuals to manage interactions with others in a way that is beneficial to those who play the roles. However, behind the fronts are a dynamic

collection of deep feelings and impressions.

The adolescent mothers in this study will be treated as creating their self definitions as a result of interactions with significant others in their environment. These definitions, and acting out or displaying of self, take place in everyday activities and interactions. An attempt is made to understand the others' experience and self-definition by examining and describing the everyday behavior and personal accounts of the subjects.

In the next chapter on methodological considerations, specific mention is made of the need to understand individuals as they experience the world. Symbolic interaction theory with its phenomenological orientation is compatible with an existential-phenomenological methodology. According to the symbolic interactionist approach, the researcher should familiarize him or herself with the subject matter by attempting to understand the subjects' responses to events and their relationships with others. After an initial description stage, the researcher scrutinizes the data in an effort to formulate generalizations and eventually lead to an attempt at explanation. In the following chapter these elements of methodology will be more fully developed.

D. Symbolic Interaction and Phenomenology

The phenomenological methodology employed in this study is characterized by the emphasis placed on attempting to understand the inner perspective of the person. Polkinghorne (Note 2) states that a problem in understanding phenomenological research has arisen because its meaning has been expanded to include almost any approach that attempts to understand the world from the perspective of the person. Polkinghorne suggests that symbolic interactionism is at times regarded as equivalent to the phenomenological approach. In order to clarify the similarities and differences between the two areas, a list of the shared attributes are presented as well as important areas of divergence:

1. Symbolic interaction and phenomenology both emphasize the unity of the human experience and the world. That is, individuals are perceived as entering into a dialogue with their environment.
2. Symbolic interaction and phenomenology conceive of individuals as living in a world that limits personal freedom. While the world is defined, it is also true that the range of definitions are limited by the context of the situation and the demands that this situation places on the individual. Some agreement of reality is required if we are to be understandable in our relations with others.
3. As individuals are co-constituents of the world, they

too become objects to be invested with meaning. This occurs intrapersonally as well as interpersonally. Individuals are thereby capable of defining themselves within context of the situation. That is, "selves" are defined situationally.

4. Human behavior develops out of the situation and is continually being constructed during its completion. One often can not predetermine the meaning of an act until its execution. Adjustments and redefinitions are a process of construction.

The emphasis of the phenomenologists is on the "Lebenswelt" (life-world) or concrete reality of an individual's experience. The *Lebenswelt* is our shared world of everyday life, the taken-for-granted world into which we are born and which we accept, taking the natural attitude toward it.

Within the *Lebenswelt* are three other modes of the world: *Umwelt*, *Mitwelt*, and *Eigenwelt*. The first, *Umwelt*, is that recognized by the Freudian system as comprising the world of biological needs, drives, and instincts, the world that exists outside of our self-awareness. The next two have more interest for the phenomenologist and symbolic interactionist. *Mitwelt* is the world of interpersonal relationships in which self and others are treated as subjects in mutual dialogue sharing a symbolic universe. *Eigenwelt* refers to the individual as experiencer one who is in relation to him or herself and recognizes that self as

experiencer.

The *Mitwelt* concept is compatible with the symbolic interactionist's view that individuals possess the ability to and necessity to engage in empathetic understanding, ascribing their characteristics and feelings onto others. The world of the *Eigenwelt* is most similar to Mead's presentation of self, the "I" and the "Me." Once the individual as experiencer ("I") is able to view him or herself as an object ("Me"), he or she becomes capable of reflectivity: of carrying on an internal dialogue with him or herself. We act by using self-indications (inner reflections) to think and organize the nature of ourselves and the world around us.

There are also some differences between symbolic interaction and phenomenology that need to be addressed. Phenomenologists question the emphasis symbolic interactionists place upon the concept of "role." These roles are the representations of the various "me's"--the social self or social selves. Role is defined as a particular form objectively viewed by self and others. Phenomenologists however, emphasize the importance of subjectivity, of the "I" aspects of the self. The phenomenologists would argue that an understanding of human actions requires a suspension of belief in the concept of role in order to understand social life as it is presented to and perceived by those we study.

Morris (1977) suggests that symbolic interactionists limit the extent of bracketing to only the role-taking level, whereas the phenomenologists continue on to two more succeeding levels of phenomenological reduction: (1) moving beyond what the experience means for the individuals, to what it means for individuals in general, and (2) extending the essence of meaning, to discover the universal, lasting nature of the phenomenon.

E. Research Questions

The chapter on methodological considerations is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the interactional components of an adolescent mother's experience of self-worth?
2. How is self-worth lost and how is self-worth regained?
3. How do adolescent mothers indicate to others that they, as adolescent mothers, are worthy of respect?
4. What are the steps in the unfolding of the motherhood experience over a period of time?

IV. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a discussion of methodological considerations following a symbolic interactionist approach. Different accounts of human behavior are presented as models of human action. These theories of human action are seen in comparison with a psychology concerned with understanding subjects' experience and understanding the meanings that they bring to their actions. To meet this purpose, an existential-phenomenological methodology is presented as an approach in describing and clarifying the meanings that the adolescent mothers bring to their interactions with others.

A. Human Action As Problematic

The understanding of human actions from a scientific perspective is also problematic. For example, when a scientist implements controls, he is acting upon past knowledge derived from experience and observation of natural situations--that is, he is relying upon his understanding of what other human beings do. Scientific knowledge is necessarily based on shared experience and common sense understanding, and is itself a problematic construction. Accounts of subjective experience would therefore suggest that an understanding of what individuals feel, perceive, think and do in natural situations would be useful before we can determine how to make controlled observations that will not distort or bias the data we observe.

B. Sociological Theories of Human Action

Traditional theories have conceived of human behavior as resulting from a linear causal relationship. Most theories (utilitarian, structural-functionalist, external & internal deterministic) are fundamentally monocausal.

The utilitarian or behavioristic school of social behavior views individuals as ultimately rational, motivated by an economic model of maximizing profits and minimizing losses. Individual action is largely determined by the need of prestige-enhancement and status-attainment. As in any closed system, there is a built-in mechanism of checks and balances. The individual perceives demands and expectations made upon him by others, and in turn gives rewards and recognition to others on the basis of individuals' perceived recognition of their ability to demand respect. Each individual is attempting to maintain or obtain a higher position in the hierarchy.

The structural-functionalists (Durkheim, 1951; Parsons, 1937; Merton, 1957) view a person as directed by norms and values--the classic outer-directed man. It is commonly accepted by the structuralists that the attainment of values is psychologically satisfying. Therefore, if one achieves success, one would feel good, and those who do not would feel depressed.

At the other extreme is the view that feelings, beliefs and sentiments are externally determined. Karl Marx (1964) does not see individuals as being determined by values and

cognitions, rather he views man as being determined by external influences-- primarily economic--and the modes of production which dictate the relationship between individuals. For example, as individuals become alienated from their labour they become alienated from themselves and each other.

There is another body of theorists who suggest that individuals' behaviors result from an internal rather than an external determinism. This group is comprised of those who argue for the primacy of an internal determinism arising from the unconscious. While these theories (primarily Freudian) have been important in accounting for the actions of individuals arising from repressed emotions, they conceive of persons' functioning being analogous to a hydraulic mechanism. The object approach of this theory does not view the actor as interpreting and planning personal responses. It is grounded in a stimulus-response model by simply changing the external for an internal stimulus. Once the stimulus makes itself felt, the individual is taken to respond mechanically, that is, without reflection, in a uniform and ultimately predictable manner. The object approach to the person implicitly assumes that the person is an entity detached from others, except insofar as others provide him with gratification (Tiryakian, 1968). The image of the person is essentially that of an isolated, one-dimensional captive. Rational man is replaced by an irrational, monocausal determinism.

The humanistic theories in psychology (Maslow, 1971; Rogers, 1961) are less deterministic but do not include a perspective on individuals functioning in an everyday world that must be constantly managed.

In summary, most theories of human action employ a deterministic model of human behavior that stresses a linear causal relationship. The individual is viewed as an object responding to stimuli, internal or external, in predictable ways. Such a model does not allow for a consideration of the meaning that individuals bring to their experience. In the next section an existential approach will be put forward as a more appropriate model for this purpose.

C. Existential-Phenomenological Model

In this section the existential model of human action is presented as compatible with a phenomenological methodology. The existential perspective pertains to the individual's experience while the phenomenological method is an instrument for describing and clarifying an individual's experience.

Existentialism is characterized in part as involving that element of human existence in its concrete totality. Misiak and Sexton (1973) provide a list of characteristics that further delineate this theme as it applies to existential psychology:

1. Existential psychology focuses its inquiry on individuals as being in the world.

2. Every individual is unique in his or her perception and reaction to the world.
3. Individuals can not be understood in terms of functions or elements.
4. Existentialists focus on the individual's consciousness, feelings, moods, and experiences related to his or her individual existence in the world.
5. The primary method of existentialism is the phenomenological method, consisting of an exploration of man's consciousness and subjective experiences.

An existential perspective on human behavior centers around the concrete individual who is grounded in a spatial-temporal position and is therefore not an abstraction (Barrett, 1962; Douglas, 1977a). Existentialists reject any assumption of a split between mind and body. Basic to the human condition is the inescapable sense of a bodily self and it is this core of feeling that is behind the mask we present to others.

The sense of bodily self, for example, is keenly felt in one's sexual identity. In their study of homosexuals, Warren + Ponse (1977) suggest that these individuals attempt to pass themselves as heterosexuals while identifying with a bodily need which is homosexual. Although some homosexuals resisted the body sense initially, all those in the study eventually identified with their physical urges. The authors conclude that it was this bodily urge which required a response from these individuals to the degree they became

actively homosexual and were forced to manage a social stigma.

In the next section human action is put in the context of interdependency with the environment. As a causal model of human behavior is limited in such a context, an existential model is presented as more appropriate to understanding human experience.

If human meanings and experiences are the focus of existential psychology then the researcher is faced with the specific task of understanding the subjects' experience.

D. Problematic Nature of Everyday Life

All life is interdependent. For humans, interdependency extends from the most simple chemical responses to an intricate balance of social and psychological interactions.

Individuals behave and respond in situations and these situations affect how people feel, think and act. The question presented here is: *How free are individuals to operate outside of the context?* That is, are the causes of human behavior to be found in trans-situational factors, or is understanding of human behavior to be only situational?

If an existential acounting of meaning and construction requires an interpretation of feelings, actions, rules and reasons, then scientific explanation may include the attempt to understand subjective meaning. The challenge is to integrate the rigorous form of traditional scientific explanation with the experiential sensitivity of humanism.

An existential social psychology differs from an existential philosophy in the attempt to generalize to trans-situational occasions through a defined methodology. While there is a reliance on the phenomenological method, an existential analysis involves certain problems which may be approached by an attempt to understand the meanings and situational character of behavior as it appears from the standpoint of the individual.

E. Subjects as Active Participants

Human beings are especially sensitive to being observed (Rosenthal, 1966; Orne, 1962). Goffman (1959) has carefully illustrated numerous occasions in which individuals have managed situations to present themselves in the best possible light. Humanist critics have suggested that, if we view individuals as conscious agents rather than as objects, we would search for the reasons of human behavior. As a result, we would impute feelings, awareness, and choice to the actors and reconstruct the meanings they experience and give to their situations. The question of meaning and interpretation form the basis of an existential phenomenological critique of human behavior.

F. Existential-Phenomenological Accounts

An accumulation of credible knowledge requires: (1) methodology, (2) theory, (3) hypothesis and (4) relevance. None of these elements can stand alone. For example, theory

suggests methodology. Due to the fact that this thesis employs a methodology, some attention will be given to this area.

It is necessary that an existential social science provide a methodology that researchers can rely upon to investigate the meanings individuals have of their actions. The existential philosophers were not interested in methodology, and there have been few researchers writing about methodological practices arising from an existential social science. The methods that have been most revealing concerning individual's meanings originate from the premise that most relevant account of human behavior arises from the ability to see past the rational fronts and to gain an accurate understanding of the deeper needs, emotions and conflicts that guide individual action (Douglas, 1977a; Johnson, 1977; Warren and Ponse, 1977). Anything that aids in this goal is a legitimate methodology device. Most importantly, humans are to be analyzed in their natural environment rather than the artificial one created by laboratory studies.

Some methodologies have advocated a general approach through the perspective of naturalism and phenomenology (Matza, 1969; Graumann, 1970; Douglas, 1971). Existential social science differs from naturalistic and phenomenological approaches in its emphasis on the situational character of everyday life and the numerous conflicting elements that are involved in managing everyday

affairs.

Existential social science does not attempt to remain in a solely subjective polarity. It does, however, attempt to rectify the balance that a rigid adherence to positivism has neglected. This balance is one of its most important features, as it demands the researcher be more accurate and complete, as a scientist and as a creative interpreter of scientific data.

G. Social Existentialists and Phenomenologists

The early forms of existentialism that have had an impact on recent research do not extend far back in tme. Soren Kierkegaard (Barrett, 1962) objected to the attempt to objectify human beings. He maintained that humans cannot be reduced to scientific objects because they exist prior to the abstracting process. Passmore (1966) seems to agree with this position when he writes that logcical deductive reasoning is limited because there is no *first premise* that exists as the ultimate standard. We ourselves--as concrete, involved individuals--choose our starting point.

The experience of World War II set the frame for a more passionate understanding of the human being. It was the war experience and the devastating destruction which led writers as Camus (1969) and Sartre (1949) to despair for what they saw to be the human condition of *bad faith* and the avoidance of choosing to take an active part in a commitment to life. They eventually saw that the one way out was to purposefully

choose to live a life for oneself and, if necessary, to rebel against the limitations of culture and history. One is threatened with the possibility of becoming no more than a thing in the world of other persons, without any life or being for oneself. In such a world,the individual is faced with continual anxiety about his or her subjective existence.

While the existential writers have provided a more passionate understanding of human beings as feeling and conflictual subjects, it is the philosophers who have provided us with the theoretical accounts. Wilhelm Dilthey (Palmer, 1969), in response to the positivist approach to human action, stated that one must always introduce previous knowledge of what it is to be human. If life itself is the starting point, then how does one engage in such an enterprise? Dilthey rejected causal systems, since this logic does not accurately indicate the way human experience is understood by individuals. Instead, life is managed by the meanings one gives to the everyday concrete situations which emerge, and it is this that may be investigated by the researcher. Dilthey writes that it is the meaning experienced during the act that is of major interest to the researcher, and not a reflection upon the act, which is solely an act of consciousness. People can only fully apprehend the world through their experience with it. Understanding (verstehen), as expressed by Max Weber, is the most important component in Delthey's philosophy. It

includes a complete appreciation of an individual's response: thinking, feeling, and perception.

Heidegger (1961), like Dilthey, reacted to Husserl's (1962) attempt to bracket the everyday world. For Heidegger, individuals are not static entities; they bring with them a history and a background of knowledge which they use to construct meanings of present situations. Therefore, he argued that we can only understand that individual in that moment by relying on the historical or previous knowedge of that individual in the situation at the moment which the understanding occurs. While as reasonable theoretically as this may sound, however, the reasonableness in terms of methodology is indeed trying.

Merleau-Ponty (1970) was influential in introducing the notion that the contextual setting is a necessary element for understanding. As the situation changes, so do the individuals. The world creates and is created by human beings. Goffman (1959) and Thomas (1928) are two of many social psychologists who felt that interpretations were affected by the context or the situation in which the action took place. The unique reactions and evaluations that a person makes is influenced by the definition of the situation. When situations change dramatically--such as in a marriage collapse or permanent debilitating illness--the tenuous problematic management of everyday life can easily be experienced (Levy, 1981).

An important contribution made by Merleau-Ponty was the conception of the felt sense of the body as the most important element of being. Furthermore, the body is the ultimate and primary source of all distance, time and meaning. In the use of the term body, he was referring to the actual physical needs, sensations, and desires as being the anchor in the world. Kotarba (1977) suggests this understanding when he writes of the pervading influence of bodily pain to alter an individual's perception of self and the world in the attempt to manage chronic pain.

H. Phenomenology and Existentialism

We have, to this point, discussed many aspects of phenomenology and existentialism which illustrate the similarities as well as the differences between the two. Both existentialism and phenomenology attempt to gain understanding of human action as based upon concrete situational events in which rational responses occur only after there is the response of subjective experience. It is this lived experience that is the focus of an existential and phenomenological analysis.

Spiegelberg (1967) has made a more thorough distinction between phenomenology and existentialism:

1. Phenomenology attempts to find absolute structures, while existentialism stresses the situated aspect of being.
2. Phenomenology is primarily a cognitive enterprise and

defines individuals as being rational, while existentialism deals with them in their totality in the everyday world.

3. Phenomenology relies on describing, while existentialism does not have any single prescribed method.
4. Phenomenology attempts to make general statements about specific properties of consciousness, while existentialism examines a particular way of life.
5. Phenomenology is abstract and uninvolved, while existentialism is involved and actively participates in the concrete reality of everyday life.

Spiegelberg is discussing philosophies, not psychologies. Grauman's (1970) statement on a phenomenological psychology suggests that the similarities with an existential approach are very close:

> The proper subject-matter of phenomenological psychology is man-in-his-world. It is man, not consciousness nor behavior, least of all responses of an organism. It is the bodily existing person. It is world, no physical reality, nor external stimuli. It is nature and the historically grown human world as far as the person experiences it, behaves toward it, is conscious of it. Thus, man-in-his-world implies that neither man nor world are independent entities, but rather terms of a meaningful relationship, the essential characteristic of which is intentionality. (p. 57)

Existential social science does attempt to discover systematic structure, although without denying the situated quality of everyday life (Fontana, 1980). In keeping with observing individuals in everyday

situations, useful methods would rely upon participant observation (Altheide, 1977; Douglas, 19771, 1977b, 1976c; Johnson, 1977; Kotarba, 1978; Fontana, 1977). This technique serves to penetrate the *fronts* which individuals present, and allows access to the concrete experience as it is lived.

The researchers who adhere to the existential perspective believe that the disciplines based on an objective deterministic model neglect to describe and understand the participants subjective experience. However, in an attempted correction to this criticism, some researchers have immersed theselves so deeply into experiencing the life under study that accurate reflection and analysis becomes impossible (Morrison, 1967; Blum, 1970; McHugh, 1974). Unfortunately, this has led to just as limited insight as possessed by the subjects they are investigating. For these researchers, the immediate concrete experiencing of the world is the most pure and deep form of knowledge possible. There is the danger that one's experience and reflection upon that experience becomes the ultimate standard of authority. The question is asked: if researchers become immersed in the phenomenon to the extent of losing themselves, how is any knowledge possible? The objective of science is to explain, describe, and otherwise communicate elements of the human experience in as general and concise terms as possible. However, there is

an aspect of existential research that explicitly addresses the scientific epistemology: both the researcher and the researched share the world in which they live and are therefore part of the study. The social scientist cannot assume a privileged position outside of the study. They are inevitably bound to it, and it is precisely this boundedness which allows them to understand human action. However the researcher must bracket his or her common-sense assumptions if he or she is to act as a viable research instrument in the understanding and describing of human experience.

A phenomenological approach requires that the researcher step back from the taken-for-granted, everyday reality in a bracketing of the world. That is the researcher puts aside pre-conceived notions about experience and approaches the data in an open-minded manner. The task is to study life's problematic features, the array of feelings that underlie rationality, and to understand how we cope with the complex task of managing our affairs so that they give some appearance of orderly and purposeful behavior.

Fontana (1977) writes that the phenomenological existentialists are concerned with more than rational behavior as factors influencing human action.

> They rely on the existential approach and, in seeking trans-situational features, consider elements such as the situated and problematic nature of social interaction and the importance of feelings. (p. 204).

Peter Manning (1973), in describing existential sociology, comments that the approach concerns itself with:

> ...viewing social organization as constantly being made apparent, destroyed, repaired or constructed situationally, and to exploring contradictions and conflicts within alternative systems of meaning and the conditions that give rise and support them. (p. 204).

In his analysis, Manning claims that an existential analysis of individuals in society recognizes that humans are situated in the world and relate to it from a given place and time. Therefore, the perspective considers the situated aspect of the researcher as a fact that presents itself as data, the problematic nature of life occurs when one is situated in an event that cannot be explained from the commonsense constructed reality. This provides an *epoche*, a novel situation in which normal behavior and thinking no longer apply. For the existentialist, the first priority is to become immersed in the experience, and to *step back*. In taking the stance of the observer, the researcher may be able to reach a trans-situational understanding of events rather than becoming lost in the inner subjectivity of primitive existentialism. The methodology is purposefully open-ended in response to the continual adjustments, re-definitions, and situatedness of everyday experience.

In the previous sections of this chapter, existential and phenomenological accounts of human

behavior were described. Together they form a construct and methodology that is useful in describing and explaining human behavior. Phenomenology looks for structures through a descriptive approach and attempts to make general statements about specific properties of consciousness. Existentialism stresses the situated aspects of being. Together, phenomenology and existentialism express a concern with human experience at the lowest order of abstraction. That is, the intent is to examine immediate experience rather than higher orders of thought about that experience.

The next section describes the particular phenomenological method employed to gather the data in this study.

I. Summary of Chapter

This chapter provided a discussion of various models of human action. Most of these models employed a deterministic bias that relegated the examining of human action in a linear causal structure. As an alternative an existential-phenomenological approach was put forth as a method for describing and explaining human experience. The phenomenological method begins with man-in-his-world and attempts to describe and then formulate themes of human experience. The existential element emphasizes the necessity of observing individuals in their everyday actions in an attempt to understand individuals in their concrete

experience.

J. Review of the Literature

An extensive review of all literature on adolescent pregnancy was completed by Phipps-Yonas in 1980. The initial conclusion from this survey is that there is no psychological profile common to most pregnant adolescents. The attempt to find a single psychological predictor has been unrewarding. While a number of adolescents who appear to be susceptible to becoming pregnant, do not, a number of adolescents who do not fit the predictors, do become pregnant. Unable to find distinguishing characteristics of pregnant adolescents, Phipps-Yonas suggests the only crucial determinant is sexual intercourse resulting in pregnancy. However, there exist studies since Phipps-Yonas that do support the findings suggesting a distinct description of adolescent mothers in terms of ego-strength and self-concept.

A number of articles are written that emphasize psychoanalytic interpretations of teenage pregnancy. Clark (1967) suggested adolescent sexuality and pregnancy is a substitute for acceptance and results from inadequate mothering. In a similar manner, Vonderahe (1969) writes that poor parenting produces an insecure adolescent who does not acquire feminine poise and self-protective restraint.

Floyd and Viney (1973) through the pschoanalytical approach, address the ambivalence adolescent mothers have of

their ego identity. The authors described ego identity as the ability to experience one's self as something that has continuity and to act accordingly. They concluded from their research that adolescent mothers are very uncertain about their ego identity and their ego ideal. In less psychoanalytic terms, this probably may be best described as a large incongruence between their real and idealized selves. Findings also revealed that these adolescents had greater dependency needs than a comparable group of young women, however some caution was recognized in their statement that these dependency needs may be a function of the state of pregnancy. A second hypothesis in the study was supported by data suggesting that adolescent unwed mothers have less adequate feminine identification compared to both a group of single non-pregnant women and a group of married pregnant women. The authors report that to be a wife with a child is associated with strong positive identification of ego with ego ideal.

Another study dealing with identity formation was completed by Protinsky, Sporakowski, and Atking (1982). Based upon earlier research by Davis and Grace (1971), Smith (1970) and Curtis (1974) reported pregnant adolescents as alienated from peer relationships, inactive, and tending to be loners. Protinsky et. al. hypothesized that pregnancy during adolescence complicated the process of identity formation. These authors were guided in their research by the writings of Erikson (1968) on the developmental stages

of identity formation and employed the Ego Identity scale as a research instrument. The results of this study were basically in agreement with those of Floyd and Viney (1973) which suggested the ambivalence of adolescent mothers about their ego identity. Adolescents who are confused about their identity were reported to experience a painful sense of isolation, overall shame, and difficulty in performing concrete actions. In keeping with Erikson's emphasis on parental responsibility in forming a child's ego identity, Howard (1960) suggests that adolescent girls who had poor relations with their parents characterized by much criticism and lack of affection, tended to have a higher incidence of identity diffusion. Paradoxically, while writers from a psychoanalytic persuasion have written that an adolescent may wish to have a child for their mother, or to gain an affectionate bond with their baby, the result is often one of increased alienation and shame.

Further research by Protinsky et. al. have led the authors to conclude that pregnant adolescents lack a belief in the trustworthiness of others and have lost their opportunity for success in life. Given the identity confusion experienced by these adolescents, the same authors suggest that these adolescents have prematurely fixed on a role, possibly that of motherhood. The choice of a mother role may be preferable to experiencing no identity at all. As Erikson suggests, a negative identity may be chosen if that is one that has been most reinforced and seems most

real.

Adolescent mothers in this study scored low on the test measuring Industry vs. Inferiority which suggests these adolescents do not feel adequate about themselves and their abilities. As a result, the subjects may not feel competent in the areas of work and school where there is a certain degree of competitiveness and risk-taking.

Interview data (Cobliner, Schulman, Romney, 1973; Kane, Lachenbruch & Lipton, 1973) have suggested that pregnancy may be a means of replacing an emotional loss of a significant person. The data also leads the researchers to report that there is often a considerable amount of family conflict, especially in regard to the mother, and the adolescent may choose to have a baby out of competition with the mother or as a revengeful act to punish the mother. Other motives may be the need to escape from an unhappy family life or to escape from their own sense of isolation and dependency. However, Cannon-Bonventre and Kahn (1979) found that while the motive may have been to achieve increased independancy and self-esteem, the result is often one of loneliness and isolation.

In the area of self-concept and self-esteem, Abernathy, Robbins, Grechbaum and Weiss (1975) report pregnant adolescents reveal low self-esteem, alienation from the mother, promiscuity and careless use of contraception if the parent's relationship is characterized by distance and hostility. Low self-esteem was seen to originate from

unsatisfactory identification with the mother who was a distant emotionally cold figure.

In two independent studies, Bain (1971) and Lindeman (1974) write that failure to use birth control was a factor of the adolescent's self-concept of being an individual who was not sexually active. It is not uncommon for some adolescents to have denied the fact that they are pregnant as a function of trying to maintain an identity of one who is not sexually engaged with another. The self-concept of these individuals would allow a spontaneous sexual encounter but preplanned sexual contact was too incongruous with their self-perceptions. As a result, they could not control for the consequences of their behavior. Phipps-Yonas writes that adolescent girls who are more accepting of their sexuality and sexual involvement are the most likely to use contraceptive devices. There is also some evidence that these individuals have greater internal locus of control and are better problem-solvers.

Those adolescents who have less internal locus of control also demonstrate decreased interpersonal power in terms of taking some direction in an heterosexual relationship. Jorgenson, King and Torrey (1980) conclude that these behavior characteristics result in a greater risk fo pregnancy as the young woman engages in increased sexual contact and decreased utilization of contraception.

Weak ego structure resulting in sexual acting out was interpreted by Babikan and Goldman (1971) as a function of

poorly developed defenses against strong sexual drives occurring during adolescence. The initial causes of adolescent pregnancy was seen by these researchers as being based on poor child-parent relationships characterized by chaotic distant interpersonal contact.

Employing the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, Zongker reported pregnant adolescents as having a poor self-concept. These subjects were dissatisfied with our own behavior, had strong doubts about their identity and had a decreased sense of self-worth. The adolescents were generally defensive and unhappy about their relationship with others, themselves, and were generally pessimistic about the future. They exhibited considerable identity confusion, lacked coping skills, had a poorly developed sense of adequacy, and displayed instability both emotionally and in relationship with others.

In terms of changing the self-concept of pregnant adolescents and young unwed mothers, Shiller (1974) and Kogan, Boe and Valentine (1965) have reported positive results in self-concept and generally improved feelings of self-worth as these adolescents have taken part in a group counselling and structured programs.

The conclusion from the literature on pregnant adolescents' self-concept suggests that attention should be paid to strengthening these individuals' feelings of self-worth; helping them to develop appropriate goals, skills and behavior. A comprehensive program for adolescent

mothers would ideally include family counselling, academic and vocational assistance, group counselling, parenting skills, and day care.

The stages of self-concept change have been put forth by Forsyth and Floyd (1981) building upon the work of Lofland and Stark (1965). The later researchers, in their investigation of a religious cult, described the conditions characterizing an individual's conversion into a religious cult. Forsyth and Floyd developed a conversion model that may account for a large number of self-concept changes other than through the process of religious involvement.

The model consists of a sequence of six stages: (1) tension between actual state of affairs and an imagined possibility; (2) failure of current action to establish an acceptable identity; (3) seekership that implies some personal problem-solving orientation; (4) a turning point; (5) relatively low stakes in maintaining the current identity; and (6) intensive interaction. The authors conclude that the model may be applied to non-religious forms of conversion. They suggest that it may be successfully applied in the description of individuals leaving deviant life-styles. This researcher believes that the model may also be applicable, with some modifications. to the change in self-concept experienced by adolescent mothers as they progress from a time shortly before their pregnancy to a time of becoming young mothers.

Other relevant literature to the present research is that completed by Cowie (1976) and Levy (1981). Cowie studied the stages cardiac patients went through as they adapted to the traumatic experience of suffering a heart attack. The illness was of such magnitude that individuals felt both their physical and psychological integrity was threatened. The event had to be fitted into the individual's understanding of reality or else the attack would remain an unpredictable force that may overwhelm the person at any time. Although Cowie does not make the point, there is some suggestion that individuals, in order to relieve stress-producing situations, must make sense of difficult events and thereby gain some measure of control over them. In the case of the cardiac patients, these individuals reconstructed a past history that normalized the event and engaged in comparing themselves to other heart attack patients. Cowie concludes that these two processes allowed the individuals to normalize their heart attacks.

Levy also interviewed heart attack victims and generally supported Cowie's findings. In addition, Levy applied a phenomenological methodology to describe the essential components in the illness experience. From an analysis of significant statements patients made about their heart attack, Levy was able to abstract several thematic structures that served in part to describe the general sequences individuals went through in coping with their heart attacks. A feature of the findings was that some

patients were unable to fit the event into their past in some understandable way. These individuals also demonstrated vague intentions about how to cope with their situation. Levy concludes that those individuals who fail to reconstruct their past in a meaningful way to include their illness, will have difficulty dealing with the effects of the heart attack.

In summary, the literature on self-concept and adolescent pregnancy suggests that these individuals have poorly developed ego identities, generally negative self-concepts of worth, lack basic trust in others and the world in general, experience a considerable distance between their real and ideal selves, have little initiative and tend towards passivity while being oriented to an external locus of control. They usually come from conflictful families characterized by lack of affectionate bonds with the mother. Reasons for becoming pregnant have included wanting to replace a missing affectionate bond, to please her mother, to punish the mother, and needing to establish one's self in a feminine identity, and to escape an intolerable home situation. Improvement in self-concept has been achieved through group counselling and programs designed to teach academic and vocational skills. Self-concept change has been characterized as a sequence of stages. A model has been produced that may be adaptable to identity change experienced by adolescent mothers. Finally, individuals undergoing significant life events tend to construct a past

in order to give a sense of continuity and meaning to their present life circumstances. Individuals who fail to incorporate significant experiences into their lives are less likely to construct appropriate means of action.

The significance of these findings for this research are as follows:

1. What common themes are present in adolescents' descriptions of their motherhood experience?
2. How do these themes suggest a change in self-concept?
3. How are other individuals involved as the adolescents alter their self-concepts?
4. Can self-concept change in adolescent mothers be described as following a sequence of stages?

V. METHODOLOGY

The initial step in conducting this phenomenological research required that the researcher examine his approach in order to uncover presuppositions about the subject area. As I analysed my assumptions about motherhood, I discovered certain presuppositions that served as guides in the formulation of my research questions:

1. Some women do not want children and even regard child-raising as unfulfilling.
2. Having children would mean an alteration in the parent's life style that would be difficult to adjust to.
3. Parents like to present themselves as adequate parents and they would be resentful of others who were critical of their parenting skills.
4. New parents undergo a change, cognitively and affectively, in terms of self-concept.

In my conversations with young women who have recently become mothers, I have found that my presuppositions have largely been supported. As well, these mothers were able to provide me with additional information: (1) the difficulty of raising a child without a partner, (2) the need to seek outside support, and (3) the anxiety they experience in trying to be "good" parents.

An examination of my own presuppositions and discussions with mothers led me to formulate specific research questions. The subjects were asked the questions in the style of an open-ended interview. That is, the subjects

were encouraged to respond to the questions in as full a manner as possible in an effort to obtain their unique experience as mothers.

Each interview was reviewed with the intention of gaining impressions about the content. In the next step, individual ideas were grouped into higher order clusters of meaning themes. For example, a subject replied, "I've felt like crying all the time since he left." This was interpreted as "experiencing sadness over the loss of a significant relationship." In the next stage of the process this meaning unit was placed under a theme called: Betrayal: The Loss of Trust.

The project was operated by three staff members on a daily basis. The researcher spent approximately half of the day at the project site, and the rest of the day attending to administrative duties, visiting the adolescents at their homes or interviewing the adolescents in his office.

A. Participants

The subjects were 10 adolescent mothers who were participants in a social life skills and parenting skills program that took place over a three month period involving three separate, three-week sessions. The mothers were generally grouped in the low socio-economic category as measured by combined income, social status, and educational standing, although no formal measure was made. Three of the mothers were presently living at home with a parent. One

mother was living with a man in a common-law relationship. The other mothers were living on their own or were in foster homes. All of the mothers were receiving social assistance.

B. Setting

The setting consisted of a number of rooms in a local community league centre. One room was designed to accommodate the subjects' children and functioned primarily as a day-care center. Another room was primarily for the use of the mothers and it was here that group discussions and the teaching of parenting skills and social skills occurred. The interviews were conducted individually in a private office, in their homes, or near the community centre.

C. Procedure

All of the subjects gave an oral response to the question and the researcher recorded their responses in a note book. The responses of seven of the adolescents were also tape recorded. The depth of information gained as a result of tape recording did not vary significantly from note book recording only. The mothers were asked the following two questions:

1. How would you respond to the statement: "Being a mother is a good life"?
2. How do you feel about yourself as a mother?

The first question was aimed at discerning how the subject experienced motherhood--how this experience "fitted"

into the normative ideal of motherhood as basically positive. The second question was designed to tap and make explicit how motherhood was reflected in a sense of self-worth.

After the first two questions were answered, the interview with the adolescents proceeded on an open-ended basis with the intent of discovering how the adolescents felt about themselves in relation to the events they had been through. The intent was to find out the individual's sense of personal worth and identity as well as significant events and changes in attitude and feeling that suggested an alteration in self-concept. Not all the interviews were completed upon one occasion. Extraneous events made it necessary for some of the interviews to be continued after an interruption. As well, on a number of occasions this researcher upon review of a tape or field notes would approach the subject again for clarification. While an attempt was made to meet with the adolescents in my office, it was not uncommon to proceed with interviews outside in the park, or in their residences.

All of the participants in this study were informed that my questions and their answers were for research purposes. The interviews lasted approximately from forty-five minutes to two hours and were semi-structured in an effort to allow the subjects to discuss their experiences.

D. Data Analysis

To accomplish the first aim of this study (to reduce the descriptions of unmarried adolescent motherhood to its essential components), each interview was examined as it related to the first question: Can you describe for me the experience that brought you to this program? After getting a sense of the whole process, each natural meaning unit expressed by the subject was abstracted. This was done for each subject and then common themes across subjects were grouped and labelled according to their central significance. That is aspects of the unfolding process were related to interpretations provided in the literature (for example, the symbolic interactionist approach to the unfolding or construction of reality), as well as to interpretation by this writer of common themes expressed throughout.

The method employed fulfills the requirements for descriptive research as defined by Isaac and Michael (1981).

VI. RESULTS

The interview accounts were analyzed following a model on protocol analysis derived by Colaizzi (1978) and modified for the purpose of this study. The procedural steps are as follows:

1. All of the subjects' responses to the interview questions were read in order to obtain a general sense of their meaning.
2. Each account was then analyzed in an effort to extract phrases or sentences that pertain to the question. In essence, this was a procedure of extracting significant statements.
3. Significant statements are then examined in an effort to determine what these statements mean. The derived formulations should discover and clarify those meanings responses. For example, a subject responded, "My father never had anything good to say about me and I always tried to make him happy. When he left there was nothing I could do. I tried to see him but I guess he really didn't want me and it was like I wasn't anything." The researcher formulated the meaning of this statement as "She did not feel wanted by her father even though she tried to obtain some sign of affection from him and his leaving left her with a sense of loss and sadness."
4. The above procedure is repeated for each interview and the aggregate formulated meanings are organized into clusters of themes.

5. The clusters of themes or general meanings are expanded upon and amplified.

An example of the above procedure is reproduced here using the responses of one subject. Table I represents the data and results of the analysis. Table I includes the significant statements from the representative interview and the theme clusters that were abstracted from the statements. The numbers in parentheses refer to the statements, and the capitalized leters refer to the themes.

The same procedure was used with all subjects. For reasons of economy not all of the interviews are reproduced in length. However, selected portions of the interviews are given in the seventh chapter and are intended to illustrate points of discussion.

Representative Interview

How would you respond to the statement: "Being a mother is a good life"?

It depends on what you want. I don't know. I guess for me it is both good and bad. Having kids is really tough because you really have to give them a lot of time. I grew up in foster homes and I jumped around a lot from place to place and I knew I wasn't going to let that happen to my kids. What really gets me is that you have to have a lot of patience and I get scared sometimes about what I might do because he gets so stubborn. Nobody showed me how to

bring up kids.

How do you feel about yourself as a mother?

I think I'm better than a lot of people. But I wish I knew more sometimes like when Billy has a temper tantrum and the only thing I feel like doing is pulling my hair or kicking the door. It makes me mad because I want to do the right thing but I know I must be doing something wrong like if I had better parents myself maybe I would know what to do. That's why I have to get help.

What sort of help did you receive when you became a mother?

A lot of people put me down and said that I should give the baby up or have an abortion because I could never handle a baby. Especially my foster mom and some social workers. Sometimes I would like to grab some of those people and hurt them the way they hurt me. It's like they don't know how it feels to be shoved around and put down all your life. I guess one of the reasons I wanted to keep my kids and be a good mother was so I could show them that I could do it. They thought I would come running to them for help but there was no way I was going to ask them so I had to ask friends who already had kids and they could help me. It started to seem like all I ever did was be a mother and talk to other mothers about what it was like.

Table 1
Significant Statements and Thematic Structures

Significant Statements	Theme Clusters	Higher Order Clusters
1. "I would like to grab some of those people and hurt them the way they hurt me".	A. Betrayal: The loss of trust (a) One experiences rejection after placing confidence and trust in others (3,5,7) (b) Rejection is associated with feelings of sadness and anger (1,6)	I. Reactive Forces (a) One experiences life as threatening, filled with loss and danger to both body and self integrity (A,B)
2. "A lot of people put me down and said I should give up the baby..."		
3. "...they don't know how it feels to be shoved around and put down all your life."	B. Resentment: The sense of insult (a) Accusations of inadequacy are associated with feelings of anger (1,9) (b) Revenge is experienced toward those who are critical (1,2,9,10) (c) Helplessness as one is manipulated and treated with little regard for personal needs (3,4)	II. Discovering the enemy within (a) Fear and threat of uncontrolled forces are seen to rise from within (C)
4. "I was really mad at her because she was my mother ad supposed to take care of me and I was just shoved around ever since."		III. Proactive Forces (a) Motivation for change and building of self-esteem is no longer founded upon protecting one's self from threatening external forces. One desires to move beyond what one is -- to engage the world in positive co-creation (D)
5. "I think she was glad to get rid of me because I was pretty wild. I guess she had to do it but I couln't see why I couldn't stay at home."		
6. "I was really sorry because I thought he wanted to be with me and it was awfully lonely and scary."	C. Dawning: Recognizing inadequacy (a) When faced with bringing up a child, one becomes immediately aware of a sense of helplessness (8,11,12) (b) Frustration with one's inability to control events is associated with a desire to vent anger on others, one's self, or inanimate objects (11,13)	
7. "When I realized I was going to have a baby and he wasn't around, I cried a lot but finally got over it."		
8. "...if I had better parents myself, maybe I would know what to do. That's why I have to get help."	D. Reconstruction Phase: Engaging the Social World (a) One recognizes inability to cope with the situation and begins to ask for assistance from professional sources (8,13) (b) One asks friends and parents for assistance and becomes aware of relating to the world in a new role as a mother (8,14,15)	
9. "...one of the reasons I wanted to keep my kids and be a good mother was so I could show them that I could do it."		

Table 1(Continued)
Significant Statements and Thematic Structures

Significant Statements	Theme Clusters	Higher Order Clusters
10. "They thought I would come running to them for help, but there was no way I was going to ask them...."		
11. "...when Billy has a temper tantrum and the only thing I feel like doing is pulling my hair or kicking the door."		
12. "It makes me mad because I want to do the right thing but I know I must be doing something wrong...."		
13. "What really gets me is that you have to have a lot of patience and I get scared sometimes about what I might do because he gets so stubborn."		
14. "...I had to ask friends who already had kids and they could help me."		
15. "...all I ever did was be a mother and talk to other mothers about what it was like."		

Can you tell me something about your parents and how you got along with them?

I never knew my dad so I don't know what he was like. But my mother couldn't handle me so I went into foster homes. I think she was glad to get rid of me because I was pretty wild. I guess she had to do it but I couldn't see why I couldn't stay at home. I was really mad at her because she was my mother and supposed to take care of me and I was just shoved around ever since.

Can you tell me about boys and if you had boyfriends, how you got along with them?

Billy's father I guess was my first real boyfriend. I don't have a boyfriend now and I don't really want one. We were getting along pretty good but he didn't want to be a father and he left. I was really sorry because I thought he wanted to be with me and it was awfully lonely and scary. When I realized I was going to have a baby and he wasn't around, I cried a lot but finally got over it.

The results represent the condensation of all constituents into one general description of adolescent motherhood.

Motherhood is an experience that heightens one's relationship to others as they play a supporting or detracting role to the subject's new status. One is suddenly put into a new position that encourages

Pages 66 and 67 omitted in the page numbering.

recollection of past experiences in growing up especially as it relates to sadness and loss of relevant individuals from one's past. Vulnerability and inexperience suddenly bring one to an awareness of needing others for emotional support which is accompanied by feelings of loss and to a lesser degree anger and feelings of rejection as one is reminded of how others abandoned them in some manner. One interprets others' criticisms as accusations of inadequacy especially as they center around competency as a mother. A response of anger and indignation enters into one's experience as a need to strike back at the offending persons takes on a heightened significance. One feels defensive and compares one's self to others in a similar situation and makes a judgement on their own adequacy. As others control one's access to their own children, subjects experience frustration and anger as they realize their inability to control their own lives and feel cheated of a relationship with their child that rightfully belongs to them. When one begins to act on the directions of others a sense of anger and resentment is maintained as one feels compelled to enter into an activity designed to assist them but which they resent. Anger is lessened as one begins to actively accept assistance and recognize there is more to gain for themselves

than holding resentment and anger toward others.

A. Model of Self-Concept Change For Adolescent Mothers

From an analysis of the themes presented in the adolescent motherhood experience a model was created illustrating the sequence of changes in self-identity. The stages are as follows: (1) tension, (2) failure of present behavior to produce an acceptable self-identity, (3) turning point, (4) little investment in maintaining current identity and (5) intense involvement with others. This model is an adaptation of a general model of radical conversion presented by Forsyth and Floyd (1981).

From Lofland's (1965) perspective, tension results when there is a discrepancy between some imagined state of affairs and actual circumstances. Tension would seem to play some element in self-concept change and most theories of personality change include some description of it (Lewis, 1938; Frank, 1978). As a precipitating experience, tension would therefore appear to be a necessary although perhaps not a sufficient factor in self-concept change.

Tension that is prolonged is obviously uncomfortable and suggests that present action fails to produce an acceptable self-concept. However, awareness of the current behavior failure is not always sufficient to induce the individual to seek some form of specific solution. For example, some individuals simply drift, engage in numerous defense mechanisms such as rationalizations, possibly become

engaged in extensive drug and alcohol use, or even commit suicide. In a discussion on radical conversion, Forsyth and Floyd (1981) suggest that seeking change stems from the recognition of failure and implies some action to solve the problem. For example, an alcoholic may be a prime candidate to become an ex-alcoholic when he or she defines the alcoholic identity as a failure to meet life's requirements.

Tension and the failure of the present behavior to produce an acceptable self-identity appear to be most closely related to the themes of betrayal: the loss of trust, and resentment: the sense of insult. As the adolescents experienced feelings of loss and helplessness, a degree of unhappiness and tension would result as a happier time would be remembered or an awareness of an imagined time in the future of intimacy with another.

Turning points are characteristic of most individuals' lifespan. These range from leaving home to changing jobs. However, the type of turning point discussed here refers to desire to engage in some action that will resolve some identity problem. The attempt is to move from a deficient self-concept to one that is more positive. Obviously, however, there is no clear dividing line and the pressure to adopt a more constructive self-concept is one of degree. The move to a new definition of self does not always proceed smoothly as there is often an investment in a present identity that may hinder a transformation. For example, if an individual is receiving rewards for being inadequate,such

as having others assume responsibility, then a change to an identity emphasizing competency which implies responsibility, may be approached with some trepidation. With the adolescent mothers there were those individuals who had to a degree adjusted to the role of victim and likely felt hesitancy in viewing themselves as presently responsible for improving their lives. For a change in self-concept to be promoted, it would therefore be advantageous to have little investment in maintaining the current identity.

Finally, self-concepts are in part maintained by interpersonal involvement with others regardless of how inadequate they may be in terms of providing supports for a positive self-concept. For example, if effective change is to be more or less permanent for an alcoholic imbedded in a social network emphasizing heavy drinking, then clearly a change in that person's social support system must also accompany a change to not drinking. It is interesting to note that in some eager individuals attempting to convert others to a radical orientation will attempt to isolate the subject from usual forms of social support while at the same time presenting a substitute which supposedly exists for the subject's "true" interests. Lifton (1961) in a discussion on brainwashing in China and Lofland in a study of radical religious conversion both emphasize this point. Other more commonly accepted agents of identity change are institutions such as Alcoholics Anonymous. In terms of this study, the

individuals attempting to play an increased role in indirectly altering the adolescent's identity would appear to be the social workers and perhaps secondarily the staff at the parenting and life skills project. In relation the themes, the stages of (1) intensive interaction with others, (2) little investment in maintaining the current identity an and (3) turning point appear to be most closely related to dawning: the sense of inadequacy, and reconstruction phase: engaging the social world.

A table follows combining the themes and stages of self-concept change as they would appear with the stages subsumed under the themes (see Table 2).

The model was further modified employing the method of analytic induction employed in a number of other studies (Forsyth + Floyd, 1981; Jones, 1980). The content of the interviews with the adolescents were reviewed in terms of two conditions: (1) does the interview meet the definition of self-concept change in adolescent mothers, and (2) if so, are the elements contained in the model. If the case did not meet the model then it was excluded. However, if the case was consistent with the definition but did not contain the elements within the model, then the model was changed to include the case while at the same time maintaining all the other previous cases.

A representative sample of fitting the model to an interview with one of the adolescent mothers is given in Table 3.

Table 4 illustrates the case characteristics and the sequence of self-concept change for the adolescent mothers. The numbers represent the behavioral and attitudinal features of self-concept change. If an analysis of the data suggested that the adolescent in question possessed the characteristics, then a + sign was placed in that column. If the factor was not present then a 0 sign was indicated, or if there was not sufficient information for this researcher to draw a conclusion then a ? sign was placed. For example, the representative interview presented in Table 3 corresponds to case number 1 in Table 4. This particular individual was interpreted as possessing all Five Factors in the self-concept change sequence and therefore a + sign was placed under each column. Four of the individuals were interpreted as possessing all of the features in the self-concept change sequence, while the remaining six were interpreted as missing at least one essential feature, or the data was not clear enough to draw conclusion. Table 4 indicates that all of the adolescents displayed features that this researcher interpreted as representing a tension between an imagined state of affairs and actual circumstances. To illustrate this process, Table 5 represents the significant statements for all ten cases in relation to one particular stage: Tension. A similar process was used for the other stages. to be judged a statement displaying the tension phenomenon, the adolescent must indicate a dissatisfaction between present circumstances,

and a more favorably remembered past or sought after future. For example, recalling a more care free adolescence and contrasting that experience with a less satisfying present would be indicative of the tension phenomenon.

Table 2
Relationship of Themes to Stages of Change in the Self-concept of Adolescent Mothers

Betrayal and Resentment		Dawning and Reconstruction
tension failure of current action		turning point little investment interaction
Betrayal	= loss of trust, suddenness, rejection	
Resentment	= anger, revenge, helplessness	
Dawning	= awareness of personal helplessness and possibility of change	
Reconstruction	= engaging the social world	
Tension	= unhappiness with current situation	
Failure of current action	= inability to establish an acceptable identity	
Turning point	= seeing a possibility to take some positive action	
Little investment with current identity	=recognizes relative stakes	
Interaction	= becoming positive engaged with new social partners	

Table 3

Significant Statements and Their Relations to Stages of Self-Concept Change

Significant Statements	Stages of Self-Concept Change
1. "Before I had my baby, I used to go out all the time, you know, like to parties...staying out late. People used to say that nothing bothered me and if someone was feeling down, I could get them out of it. But with having a baby, I never go out and things are just more serious. I miss alot of my friends and the good times...maybe it's me, I just have to get less serious."	A. Tension: discrepancy between some imaginal state of affairs and actual circumstances.
2. "I don't think they (relatives) even cared if I was pregnant or not. There was nothing I could do that would please her anyways, so there had to come a time that I started thinking about myself.	B. Failure of current action to produce an acceptable self-identity.
3. I remember when I was in school that there was a girl who wasn't very good in sports and then the next year she just seemed to blossoim and became one of the school's sports stars. I asked her how she managed to make the change and she told me that she just decided to put it all out and not hold anything back. Looking back at it, I guess that is how it was for me. I saw that I wasn't getting anywhere and decided that I had to start living for myself. Finding out what it really was that I wanted and going for it. There was just one disappointment too many.	C. Turning Point: A step toward positive action.
4. If I didn't have a baby, I probably would be back on the street. You never knew what was going to happen one day from the next. I guess it was the excitement of that and having friends you could depend on. But I also know what happens to girls who stay down there very long and I don't want to end up like that....I would like to get married sometime so my child could have a father. I just think that when you balance things out, that is a better way to live.	D. Little investment with current identity.
5. At first, I didn't like a social worker telling me what I was supposed to do with my baby. She didn't know me how could she tell me how I was supposed to be a mother to my child. I finally started to get to know her and I guess we became friends. She used to spend a lot of time with me and took an interest in me as a person. I saw that she was trying to help and I guess I could say she was pretty important in helping me get my life straightened around.	E. Intensive interaction: positively with new social partners.

Table 4
Sequence of Self-Concept Change by Case

Case No.	Change Sequence* 1	2	3	4	5
1	+	+	+	+	+
2	+	+	+	+	+
3	+	+	+	?	+
4	+	+	+	+	+
5	+	?	?	+	+
6	+	+	+	?	+
7	+	+	+	+	?
8	+	+	+	+	+
9	+	?	0	0	0
10	+	+	0	?	0

+ = factor present
0 = factor not present
? = insufficient information
*1 = Tension
2 = Failure of current action
3 = Turning point
4 = Little investment with current identity
5 = Intensive positive interaction

Table 5
Significant Statements and Their Relation to the Stage of Tension* in Self-Concept Change

	Significant Statement
1.	"Before I had my baby, I used to go out all the time, you know, like to parties...staying out late. People used to say that nothing bothered me and if someone was feeling down, I could get them out of it. But with having a baby, I never go out and things are just more serious. I miss a lot of my friends and the good times...maybe it's me, I just have to get less serious."
2.	"I was doing okay. I took care of my baby okay and then they made me feel like I wasn't, I love my baby and I just want to take care of him...I was happy and could do what I wanted to...I get angry a lot and I'm not going to be happy until I can do what I want."
3.	"I wish he was still a little baby. It gets harder because he is older and I loved him so much, and I guess I always will. People still say that I won't last with him but I'm going to prove them all wrong...I know that I will keep him and someday everybody will know that I can take care of him and his is going to stay with me forever...I just want to learn how to take care of him."
4.	"I was happy with my life and by boyfriend and I really liked what I was doing...He wanted to marry me...I got pregnant and he didn't want me to keep it...He started hitting me and finally I didn't want him back...I was so happy when we were going to get married and now I get sick all the time."
5.	"Things went pretty good for a while but after I was pregnant things went down hill and I told him to get out. For a while it look like things were going to be okay and I could say I was satisfied, not great maybe, but satisfied. I would like to get it back to that way."
6.	"It was really exciting being on the streets. I had lots of friends there and we always took care of each other...If I could, I would go back to the street but I guess with a kid it's not so easy. I'm not so happy now and I know I would be happier if I was back with my friends."
7.	"When we first started going with each other I guess I was pretty happy, and then I found out I was pregnant and I really wanted the baby...My baby is happy but I get sad and depressed when I have to take him back."
8.	"For a while I was suicidal but when I was in the group home things were going okay...We were fine for a long time and then he started beating me. My life is a mess now because everyone has screwed me up."
9.	"I was happy when I was pregnant...But after I had him I got pretty depressed and I couldn't take care of him so I let my sister have him. She was drinking and then my baby got taken away. After a while I wanted him back, and I think how happy I would be if my boyfriend, me and my baby could be together."
10.	"After I had the baby everything went downhill. I couldn't get welfare and I felt guilty about having a baby at my age. I finally had to give my baby up because I was in debt so much...Only a couple of years ago I was just fourteen and was really happly and now so much has happened that sometimes it's hard to figure it out."

*Tension = unhappiness with current situation coutrasted with a move favorably remembered past or sought after future.

VII. DISCUSSION

In the following sections of this chapter a discussion will be presented of the major findings in terms of significance and meaning. Selected examples of interview transcripts will be reproduced to illustrate specific interpretations. The chapter ends with a discussion on the limitations of the study.

The four major themes of the thematic structure (see Table 1) suggested a process of unfoldment and therefore each theme should be interpreted in relationship to the others.

The names in the following discussion are fictitious.

A. Betrayal: The Loss of Trust

Self-Worth and Positive Relations

A sense of betrayal involved the loss of a significant other. Most often when this was mentioned by the subjects they were referring to individuals with whom they had or wanted to have intimate relations, notably parents and the baby's father.

Jana: My mother was angry when she found out that I was pregnant. She didn't want me around and so I moved out of town. I was so lonesome. I didn't have anybody I could turn to so I moved back to town.

Nancy: I met this guy and we started going out

> together. After 3 months he left town and never did tell me. I was two months pregnant and thought that I would see him again. He never came back....I was really hurt because it was his baby and I thought he wanted to be with me.

Another subject expressed her loss of relationship as having consequences for her sense of personal identity.

> Researcher: After he left, how were things for you?
> Kelly: Well, it was like a piece of me was gone. I didn't really know who I was or what I wanted to do. I cried a lot and just felt like nothing.

Horney (1937) writes that the root of basic anxiety is the factor of parental indifference: "The basic evil is invariably a lack of genuine warmth and affection. A child can stand a great deal of what is often regarded as traumatic--such as sudden weaning, occasional beating, sex experiences--as long as inwardly he feels wanted and loved" (p. 80).

While all individuals may sense the injustice of their treatment from others, young people are at a special disadvantage from adult transgressors because they often are not in a position to directly express their sense of loss or angry feelings. As children are dependent upon their parents, experienced hostility directed toward the parents is threatening because an outward expression of anger may invoke other forms of rejection and loss of love. It is Horney's (1937, p. 85) contention that repression of

hostility is triggered by a combination of feelings: helplessness, fear, love or guilt.

Individuals faced with such fear and repressed anger may begin to generalize this sense of anxiety and hostility to other individuals and become convinced that the world is indeed dangerous. An unfortunate feature of this process is that the individual may unconsciously encourage such a response from others as a result of a self-fulfilling prophecy. As well, these individuals may attract others who are seeking those playing the victim role. Horney suggested that a consequence of the combination of basic hostility and the resultant basic anxiety is the creation of a characteristic mode of reacting to significant others. One of these modes takes the form of complying with others and placating them. The descriptions of some adolescent mothers that follow, and of their relationships, amplify such a response to others.

One may also note that such compliance to others propagates a self that is manufactured to produce a desired outcome. Laing (1959) suggests that the strategy of the individual who compartmentalizes many aspects of self is to escape or to transcend the real external world by relegating all interaction with it to the false self. As a result the "individual's acts are no longer self-exressions" (p. 94). In the following descriptions rather than seeking approval for what one is, the adolescent mothers appear more likely to present a false self that others may approve of.

There were two mothers in the program whose history suggests the features of this process. One was in a relationship with another woman and was experiencing a great deal of difficulty in maintaining it in some positive sense. This young woman talked about her relationship openly. A common feature of all the girls in the program was the disastrous nature of their relationships with men. While there was no attempt to discover the rate of incidence, some of the girls in the program were victims of either incest or rape.

Alice was a tall girl and the jeans and jean jacket she usually wore added to an image approaching the masculine end of the feminine-masculine continuum. She had recently been released from a women's jail where she was being held on an eighteen-month sentence connected with an assault charge on another girl. She had a chipped tooth resulting from being ganged-up on by others in an argument over drugs. Her revelation about being an incest victim occurred while I was talking with a group of the girls about what their expectations of the program were.

Alice stated that the incest occurred over a period of four years until she finally told her mother, which resulted in her mother not believing her and being forced out of the house. Alice revealed that she had difficulty trusting other people and was able to relate this present difficulty to her experience with her parents. She further stated that her parents demanded strict obedience and she tried to be the

sort of person they expected of her for a period in an effort to placate them. Eventually, Alice realized she could not live up to her parents' expectations and began to enact the deviant behavior that her parents always accused her of.

Jean was another young woman who had similar experiences as Alice in experiencing rejection. She was a tall, attractive person and presently separated from her husband. She was living in a volatile homosexual relationship. Jean talked about her relationship with this woman freely during a conversation, and was eager to gain some understanding about her own behavior. She began by stating that they had not been talking for the last six days as a result of a violent argument and Jean was blaming herself for the difficulties in the relationship. Her self-condemnation was obvious. She stated that she tried to do everything to make her partner happy and attempted to change in order to please her but was unable to do so. Jean, for example, attempted to hide her jealousy because she knew it displeased her partner but finally the suppressed emotions flared up in an angry encounter.

Alice and Jean may represent those individuals who feel so inadequate and unloved that they desperately attempt to make themselves acceptable to almost anyone. These individuals often are brought up in homes where they never received the affection they needed regardless of how hard they tried. Marlene Rankel (Note 1),a psychologist experienced in working with incest victims, said the task

for them is to find someone who is as unloving as their parent and try to make them give some signs of affection. When Jean talked about her father, it was with feelings of confusion, hurt and guilt.

She was able to recall an incident when she was six years old that centered around her pulling a fire alarm by mistake. She reported that her father was very angry when he found out and was physically violent towards her. Apparently, he never told Jean why he was so angry and she did not find out until later. Jean stated that she tried not to get him angry but was always uncertain what she was supposed to do. She described her father's angry reactions as being very unpredictable.

Jean reported that she was forced into sexual relations with her father. Maybe she found one of the ways to get some feelings of acceptance from him. The literature on incest victims is full of accounts of individuals with these dynamics. A collage created by Jean graphically illustrates her awareness of this experience, and a striving for some sense of being which has some unity and permanence. Central to the collage was an image of two shadowy figures that Jean had torn in two jagged pieces.

Jean's choice of a figure wearing several masks in her collage is indicative of the situational aspect of self-presentation. Goffman (1974), in *Frame Analysis*, has peeled the layers off and finds that at the core there is no one there. The existentialists maintain that what is at the

core is the primal sense of being manifested through deep emotions such as sexuality, rage, greed, love and resentment. The humanists, not wanting to face the possibility of no existence, have created a self that only needs to be *actualized* or *realized*. The Buddhists, rejecting the spatial and temporal qualities of self projected by the others, are more in line with Goffman's perspective, but go beyond a mere intellectual understanding to the experiential awakening of *no self* and *no other*.

Finally, Mead (1934) suggests that individuals define themselves in relation with significant others and therefore this externally oriented self is dependent upon others. Such a process is characteristic of the outer-directed personality. Murray Davis (1973) notices that in a modern, complex society, an individual's performances for various audiences are fragmented, so that we find it hard to pull the pieces together into one presentation that we could call a self. In an effort to present ourselves as one unique individual, he suggests that we engage in intimate relations with others. Our unique identity is achieved through the affection reflected from our intimate partner. The degree of intimacy is measured by the amount and type of self-disclosure. When two individuals disclose in a manner that one or both parties view the relationship as unbalanced, strains occur in the relationship that threaten its continuation. Ironically, in disclosing beyond previously accepted safe limits, we disclose ourselves to

the other and lose ourselves in this joining. The moment we recognize our total self, we also lose it. Individuals who are so indiscriminate to make these gestures are either so insecure or lacking in a concept of self adequacy that they open themselves to others in a desperate attempt to gain some signs of affection and a reflective adequacy from their chosen partner.

The Experience of Loss

Another feature of the betrayal theme is the experience of loss. While little of a phenomenological nature has been written on the loss experience, (Solomon, 1977) interviews with the adolescent mothers in terms of their experience may have wider implication to the population at large.

The feeling of loss expressed is suggestive of related emotions such as sorrow, grief, and mourning. Someone who was a significant other no longer provides emotional security and one becomes aware of an emptiness as though a part of one's self is missing. If the subject is responsible for the loss then feelings of remorse occur, while if the other is to blame then the subject might respond with anger or jealousy (Solomon, 1977). At the extremes one may respond to feelings of loss with either openness and a desire for intimacy or defensiveness and withdrawal. A feeling of impotence may occur if one feels incapable of replacing the lost other.

A partial comparison may be made between the emotions associated with the loss of a relevant other and the four states of mourning over a literal death: denial, anger, depression and acceptance (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

Mary was a young mother who expressed feelings of anger and loss over the rejection of her boyfriend.

Mary: Bill screwed me around and had me living on skid road. But I still love him. I wish he would understand that.

Researcher: Do you still want to get back with him?

Mary: Yes, I heard where he is hanging around and I still think that I could get back with him if he could just understand how much I love him.

Mary may have been exhibiting the denial characteristics of the first stage of mourning. In spite of repeated mistreatment by her boyfriend, Mary still felt affection for him and believed that if he would appreciate her feelings for him then their relationship could continue. This example also serves to illustrate the not uncommon occurrence of seemingly opposite emotions being directed toward the same person. Mary was experiencing the sadness of loss but was also blaming her boyfriend for the departure and therefore experienced anger as well.

Summary

This section on betrayal examined the loss of relationships with significant others and the effect this

loss had on the young mothers' sense of self-worth. An individual's sense of personal worth and identity was interpreted as being dependent upon positive relations with significant others. A discussion illustrated the plurality of personal selves that individuals take on as they experience different relationships.

In the next section on resentment, the second stage of the motherhood experience unfolds. Having experienced the initial loss of relationships with boyfriends and parents, the mothers came in contact with others, most often social service agents, who began to take action in directing the adolescents' course of action. This was often met with feelings of resentment and revenge.

B. Resentment: The Sense of Insult

Interpersonal relations, of which resentment is a component, is a universal dimension of all human experience. The social world is normally organized around supportive relationships. We assume that others will respond favorably to our acts and to a degree fulfill our expectations. When this does not occur, we are frustrated and angry. Others disappoint us by not responding to our expectations of regard. However, in both gratification and disappointment, there still exists an implicitly assumed level of communication. We believe that others understand although they choose to act against us. Many young mothers in this study responded with resentment when they interpreted the

actions of court officials and social service representatives as blocking their legitimate desires, as they felt threatened with the loss of their children if they did not comply.

In contrast, when experiencing sadness, Solomon writes that the individuals became conscious of a separateness. Hope of communication is gone as the loss is experienced. Others may be seen as being indifferent to the subjects' needs as their support is lost. The individual may be physically surrounded but they are alone in their experience of loss and sadness. Shutz (1976) referred to such an experience as an inability to "tune-in" with the flow of experience of those who normally relate to the subject.

Kubler-Ross (1969) has written extensively on the stages of mourning. Although development through the stages is not the same for all individuals, a generalization holds that experiences of anger soon follow after the realization of loss. The experience of loss may be transformed into anger although the object of anger may not be the missed individual, but generalized to uninvolved third-parties. The grieving individual searches for something to defy and attack. Solomon (1977) writes that an individual experiencing sadness is also experiencing a lack of power. An individual may feel so uncomfortable with the feelings of loss and powerlessness that the experience of anger is a preferred state of consciousness. Kubler-Ross (1969) and other individuals working with individuals grieving over the

loss of a relationship believe that the experience and expression of anger is a healthy process provided that one does not neglect other experiences in the grieving process. The implications of this process for the adolescent mothers lies in the observation that experienced loss was followed by feelings of resentment and anger. While the actions of social service representatives may be defined as threatening to the adolescent mothers' self-esteem, they may also have served as convenient objects of anger as the young mothers managed the experience of sadness. In a discussion on the phenomenology of anger, Arcaya (1982) writes that through the forcefulness of anger, the world is made intelligible and one's predicament is made meaningful. Individuals may be able to regain a sense of power by ascribing motives of ill will and lack of compassion to the target of anger.

Debbie: I want to prove to some people that I can raise my kids.

Researcher: Who?

Debbie: Mother, friends, social worker. They never gave me support and always said that I couldn't do it.

When individuals feel powerless compared to others, a fundamental sense of self is being threatened. Those who possess power often control the devices for a redefinition of self. The most extreme situations of this type are to be found in total institutions such as mental hospitals, army camps, and prisons. In these places, it is customary for

individuals to be deprived of their possessions and issued those sanctioned by the institution. The mothers who had been deprived of their children through state custody may have felt a loss and anger similar to that felt by those placed in total institutions. They have been given a new definition as stigmatized individuals--individuals who are somehow deficient and unworthy. Regardless of the benevolent motives on the part of the social workers, mothers are most likely to see it as unjust.

Researcher: Are a lot of people interfering with your life?

Tara: It's hard; I cry, curse. I try to keep my mind off it. You make up your mind and just do it.

Researcher: How do you feel about your kids being apprehended?

Tara: I don't like it. The part that gets me is that I spent alot of time with Judy.

Another mother discusses the resentment she feels while expressing statements of anger and injustice similar to the mother above.

Researcher: Why did you take the program?

Ramona: I had to take the program. The judge told me because of my past history. I thought he was totally wrong. That was the past.

Researcher: Did they take your baby away from you at the hospital?

Ramona: Yeah, I saw her for a few hours and then the social worker said whe was going into care.

Researcher: What did you feel like then?

Ramona: When the social worker took my baby I felt like slapping her.

Sometimes small acts of resistance like Ramona's are more than just defense mechanisms, they constitute a self behind the mask, a self that manifests itself with courage, a self being itself regardless of shame or fear. The humanists in psychology, notably Rogers (1961) and Perls (1969), view the individual as living in deceit and anxiety as a result of being shamed into masking real needs. The need to conceal oneself, to manage a successful performance in the eyes of others, to be seen as worthy in contrast to the self that lies just beneath the tightness in the stomach and the trembling of the hands. The inner response is most likely to come out into situations viewed as threatening to our image of self worth.

Presentations of composure and competence are so vital to a positive sense of self that any challenge to that front is regarded as an affront of the most serious kind (Shott, 1979; Gross + Stone, 1964; Goffman, 1959). Many mothers in this group have acknowledged the resentment rising from an affront to their self-worth.

Self-worth in terms of esteem was recognized by Maslow (1970) as the last of the basic urges to emerge. Esteem was divided into two parts: esteem based on respect for one's competence, and esteem as granted by others. In keeping with his emphasis on the higher order needs, Maslow argued that

individuals should base their self-esteem on actual competence and adequacy rather than on the unpredictable response from others. Unfortunately a number of the adolescent mothers in this study do not have the knowledge or experience of competent motherhood and are not able to make reasonable judgements about their ability as mothers.

Adolescent mothers may be especially prone to feelings of devaluation and anguish because they are not only inexperienced mothers but are adolescents and share the difficult search for an identity that is common to virtually all adolescents. The need for acceptance, belonging, and recognition is so powerful that these adolescent mothers may seek any recognition that suggests their competence while defending against those responses that suggest a less than acceptable image. Their increased need for acceptance may also prohibit these adolescents from critically evaluating the validity of honesty of the praise or criticism.

The Experience of Insult

A review of the literature has revealed that little has been written on the experience of insult. In this present study, the researcher has interpreted the accounts of anger presented by the subjects to reflect an accompanying feeling that has been defined as insult. Although the interviews did not suggest a definitive description of the insult experience, an attempt will be offered here to separate the experience into its components. The target of insult would

appear to be outer-directed emphasizing the offensive nature of the other and one's own innocence. In the representative interview the young mother described some social workers as manipulating and uncaring while suggesting her experienced helplessness and unfairness of such treatment. As there is a perpetrator and victim involved, acts of insult may necessarily involve other persons and specifically acts of others. These acts tend to incur a defensive posture which may produce feelings of anger which is expressed to the offending person or greater distance between the individuals with an attitude of indifference. The underlying desire is to punish. However, Solomon (1977) writes that insult without the power to inflict punishment merges into resentment while power to effect action is most satisfactorily expressed through anger. The strategy employed may be to avoid focusing on one's personal weaknesses, as some of these mothers may have done in terms of their parenting skills, and tend to the unjust and improper actions of others.

Although emotions and feelings are likely comprised of a wide range of phenomenon many of the diverse components tend to overlap from one emotional state to another (Solomon, 1977). The theme of resentment has some relation to the emotion of insult. For the sake of proposing a clearer understanding of these emotions an analysis of resentment into possible components will also be presented.

The movement of resentment is directed outwards although the target seems to be more diverse than that of insult. The range of resentment may be much broader, encompassing a number of other people. There were young mothers in this group who expressed resentment against a class of subjects such as all social workers rather than any particular social worker. While the insulted idividual may feel superior to the transgressor, the resentful individual may be operating from a stance of inferiority and further mask this low self-image by exhibiting hatred and anger. Perls (1969) suggests that resentment is also masked by guilt. This occurs when a person feels unable to question what he or she has been told to believe and what he or she feels compelled to accept as what he or she ought to but is unable to assimilate and accept. Such an alteration between feelings would require considerable compartmentalizing and other defensive maneuvers such as denial in order to minimize the discomfort of self-blame altering with blaming others. The mother in the representative interview recognized her own shortcomings in mothering skills and expressed concern and guilt about her treatment of her children while still expressing resentment toward those who had the power to dictate that she improve those skills.

Symbolic interaction theory holds that individuals are continually interpreting and responding to their environment. Given the strength of feelings that the subjects in this study conveyed, a suggestion is made that

this experience of the environment, especially that comprised of other persons, is largely mediated through feelings. The feelings most salient are rather difficult ones of loss, sadness, resentment, and anger. Combined with these feelings are certain experiences that may lead to a lowered self-esteem. Kaplan (1980) for example has suggested that an experience of social devaluation may lead individuals to become increasingly isolated from pathways to socially normative behavior. How might some of the adolescent mothers be susceptible to diminished self-esteem? Possible contingencies are as follows: (1) feelings that they lack certain presumably valued qualities or behaviors (e.g., positive relationships and mothering skills); (2) they perceive themselves to be devalued by significant others (e.g., parenting figures, social workers); and (3) they may find themselves unable to defend against lowered self-esteem because (a) they feel vulnerable; (b) they may have ineffective means for deflecting responsibility (e.g., taking the victim role or engaging in fantasy); and (c) they may hold resentment and thereby prohibit themselves from taking more socially acceptable methods of adapting to external demands (e.g., admitting their deficiencies in mothering skills and taking corrective action).

In a discussion to follow on the themes of recognizing inadequacy and engaging the social world, it will be suggested that those adolescents who were able to admit to themselves and others their shortcomings, and actively

sought out others for assistance felt more positive about themselves.

In summary, resentment was a common experience for a number of mothers in response to the actual or threatened apprehension of their children by government social agencies. The apprehension of their children was experienced by these mothers as an accusation of inadequacy and their sense of powerlessness and anger in the situation was expressed by statements of hostility and revenge. The subjects' sense of self-worth was seen to be conditionally attached to approval of their role performance by others.

C. Dawning: Recognizing Inadequacy

In this third stage of the unfoldment, the mothers reported a recognition of personal inadequacy in terms of mothering. For some mothers this was an authentic recognition while for others the apparent recognition appears to be a front to appease those who are exercising control over them.

Researcher: Do you feel that you weren't treated fairly?

Mary: At first, yeah, but now I feel I have to do my part and just keep going.

Researcher: If you don't get your kids back, what does that mean to you?

Mary: I'm not a fit parent. I'm trying my best to get them back. It was my mistake to get them taken away. I can see now that there were some things

that I wasn't doing right.

Another mother expresses resentment that is characteristic of the second stage while at the same time expressing a sense that there was some justification for her child being apprehended.

Researcher: Did you feel that you were a fit mother?

Darlene: I felt I was a fit mother but I needed to take a parenting course, too. In a way, it's good. I just hate being told what to do.

Schutz (1973) refers to the process of unmotivated refocusing of attention onto a new sphere of meaning by a shift in the tension of consciousness. This alteration of the character of consciousness can occur in a variety of ways (drugs, sleep, etc.). For the adolescent mother this alteration comes with the increasing impingement of a new reality. The concreteness of the new reality becomes so strong that the mother can no longer deny the need to adjust to a new reality and a new view of herself.

Another mother recognized that she was not in control of a volatile temper and was concerned about the possible effects on her child:

Laura: I used to think that I could handle myself pretty well. I got into fights and things like that. That never really used to bother me until I started losing control around Billy and I couldn't stop myself....I started to get scared because I wasn't in control....I knew I had to

do something.

Although Laura was "unmotivated" to accept a different interpretation of events, the shift in tension of consciousness to being out of control forced her into a new reality.

The results indicate that this process of destructuring and restructuring is often a difficult endeavour involving feelings of confusion, anger, fear, and loneliness. These results also lend support to a number of psychologies that suggest individuals must disintegrate before they can reintegrate on á higher level, e.g., Dabrowski (1960), Laing (1967), Kapleau (1980). Jung (1961) writes: "neurosis is by no means only negative; it is also positive; every illness is a purgatorial fire."

Kornfield (1979) has also described the process of regression, restructuring, and reintegration as part of the basic growth pattern. In a phenomenological study of meditators, Kornfield found the meditators often experience periods of strong fear, desperation, and insecurity which appear to be central to the growth of insight. He comments that some of the most important learning in meditation retreats take place in relation to such intense negative states as rage or terror.

In summary, although the mothers may continue to feel resentment, a common occurrence was the experience of a new reality, one which necessitated a redefinition of self as being inadequate or lacking skills as a mother. This stage

in the process would suggest that as their defenses were weakened, the mothers were able to gain insight into their personalities.

D. Reconstruction Phase: Engaging the Social World

A realization comes to the mothers that if they are to maintain custody of their children then they as mothers will have to engage the larger social world. In the third stage the mothers recognized a quality of personal inadequacy and now at this final stage the mothers were actively seeking assistance from others.

Similar to the previous stage, some mothers authentically desired assistance from others, while other mothers appeared to be presenting a front of co-operation:

Mary: If I wanted my kids back I had to start doing things different.

Researcher: Like what?

Mary: Seeing a shrink. And that's not easy for me to do....I'm not used to talking to other people about my problems. I was brought up to take care of yourself.

The problem in determining the authenticity of an individual's expression lies in the dramaturgical aspect of social life. If a mother states that she is sincere in asking for assistance we do not know if only her statement is sincere or if "she" is sincere. There is a great difference between these two aspects of sincerity.

Debbie: The thing is that if I want my baby back, my social worker needs to know that I am really trying....and I am really trying to let her know.

Goffman (1959) suggested that self-esteem is a product of interacting with the social environment and as a result individuals are cautious in their interactions and especially what they reveal about themselves. The adolescents who made attempts at self-disclosure and more general revealing of their actions, risked improving their relationships with significant others and also changes in personal identity.

Interpersonal Trust

Foddy and Finighan (1980) write that individuals will only disclose information to others which puts them in a discrediting position when they do not have to worry that the others will use that information against them. Such cases might arise when the other is a stranger and the information means little to them, when the other would also lose by disclosure to outsiders, and when norms dictate that the other is ethically bound by such standards as professional ethics, for example. Trust is also enhanced when the discloser knows as much about the other knows about him. The sense of privacy possessed by a person and his definition of privacy in the situation is a determining factor in trust relationships.

The engaging in trust and honest communication is a problematic endeavour, especially for those individuals who have no reason to trust and no experience in honest communication. Persons involved with institutions or agencies that have total control in some areas of their lives, soon learn how to present fronts that are designed to appease the authorities while at the same time give the performer some degree of personal autonomy and power. The reports given to me by the adolescents suggested that they were brought up in homes that were very authoritarian, emotionally unfulfilling, and hindered any natural inclination towards close relationships. When these children became older, social services perhaps as surrogate parents, had some degree of success in reversing the influence of earlier experiences.

Some of the mothers spoke of their social workers as not always being helpful, and at times found their interactions with them discouraging. This may have been a rationalization for their own dishonesty or it may be an accurate perception of actual occurrences.

Mary: The system never lets you forget that you are a foster kid. They move you whenever they want, and I resented being treated like a rubber ball.

Researcher: How did you get along with the social workers?

Mary: Some are okay....Others just lie alot. I soon find out when they're lying and then I go right to their supervisor and demand to get another

worker.

Researcher: What would they lie about?

Mary: Things like, saying that I wasn't eligible for something when actually I was.

It is common knowledge among insiders that workers in large organizations frequently have their own informal rules that take precedence over formal rules in certain situations. Johnson (1977) and Wiseman (1970) have written about these events in the social service occupations.

The four stages of betrayal, resentment, dawning and reconstruction as presented suggest that there may be a one-way linear progression in the reconstruction of self and reality as expressed by the adolescent mothers. However, a closer examination would indicate that human experiencing is not linear. Symbolic interactionist theory holds that realities are defined and pasts are redefined to become meaningful in the emergent present (Mead, 1938). As the mothers were faced with new events in the on-going present, past events were reinterpreted to fit with the evolving construction of reality. For example, as some mothers were faced with the apprehension of their children, they initially reacted with resentment and defensiveness, but as the reality of external events became dominant, the mothers reinterpreted their behavior as mothers in a manner that was more congruent with the apprehension of their children and the definitions presented by the social agencies.

While there was not data gathered to determine whether or not mothers who "adapted" to the reality of their situation were successful in maintaining custody of their children, a casual observation indicated that those mothers who did not alter the definition of themselves to "fit" in with the definition provided by the social agencies, were often in conflict with the social agencies and had even less contact with their children.

Individuals who reconstruct their past to fit in with their present may be successful on one level but not on another. If the present environment is structured such that one questions one's own competency, the individual in question may have much to lose by accepting that definition. On the other hand, the individual may accept the definition but constructively plan to alter that status by making the current life situation a base upon which to function and intentionally manage for the future. Levy (1981) for example, writes of those individuals with rigid defense mechanisms such as extreme denial, as operating on consciousness in such a way as to limit the possibility of change toward a healthier lifestyle.

In the situation of some of these adolescent mothers, denial may lead to a rather static condition where the defense mechanisms are maintained resulting in continued feelings of being victimized and resentment. Those adolescents who were able to reasonably integrate definitions of incompetency stood a better chance of

altering that condition to a more favorable condition.

Together, the four stages of betrayal, resentment dawning and reconstruction illustrate the motherhood experience as it pertains to this select group of adolescent mothers. A discussion has highlighted the interactional, problematic, and developmental nature of the self-concept and self-presentation.

A description was given of how the subjects created meaning, lost meaning, and regained meaning through interaction with their environment. Meaning was created as the subjects defined themselves in interaction with significant others. As relationships were lost or destroyed the subjects came to re-interpret events and themselves as participants in relation to those events. In an attempt to regain self-worth, individuals created new self-definitions and managed their constructions of reality, while pursuing new lines of action.

E. Limitations of the Study

First, this study involved only adolescent mothers who were participants in a parenting and social skills project. Many of these adolescents were attending the project under some degree of coercion from social agencies. It is not known if volunteers outside of the project would have responded in the same way. Some of the information was gained in the form of open-ended interview questions. Standardization would have been increased had all subjects

been given the same questions in the same order. Optimally, it would have been preferred if a random sample were taken from a much larger population whose characteristics were known. Ideally, the adolescents should have been interviewed at the beginning and at the end of their period with the project. This was not the case with this research. Instead, most adolescents were interviewed one time only. Not all of the adolescents stayed at the project the same length of time and it was therefore difficult to respond in depth to all the questions asked.

Another limitation may have been the attitudes of the adolescents toward the researcher. Although the researcher attempted to achieve rapport and a sufficient degree of confidentiality of responses, the degree to which this was achieved is difficult to measure.

The study could have been improved had the researcher read back the interpretations made of the adolescents' interview and had obtained their confirmations or corrections.

Phenomenological descriptive research as employed here involves the researcher extracting from the significant statements, relevant themes. Such a process is one of abstraction on the part of the researcher and does present a degree of creative insight which may not be shared by others. The data could have been more complete had standardized tests of self-concept measurement been made along with the phenomenological account. Finally, change and

adjustment as an individual process is never finally completed. In this study, the researcher has termed the parameters to constitute self-concept change within the context of the adolescent motherhood experience. Clearly, an argument may be made that the event occurs beyond the boundaries stated here. One could not argue convincingly that the experience begins or ends at any specific point in time or space. Other research in self-concept change among adolescent mothers could pursue a longitudinal study to discover the stages and factors influencing self-change as they occur over a period of time. Recognition is also given to the fact that this study did not attempt to measure definitely the degree of self-concept change, only that an alteration did take place along certain themes and stages.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study examined the unmarried adolescent motherhood experience through the use of a phenomenological method and employing the symbolic interactionist concepts of the self. A discussion highlighted three characteristics of the data: (1) description of the emotions resentment, anger, insult, sadness and loss, (2) self-identity as a function of interpersonal interaction, and self-identity as maintained and altered by actively interpreting and reinterpreting both past and present behavior, (3) finally, the data was interpreted as encompassing a developmental process as individuals moved from a position of loss and anger to one of engagement and hope.

Following interviews with ten adolescent mothers in a parenting and life skills project, significant statements were recorded as they related to the research questions:

1. What common themes are present in adolescent's descriptions of their motherhood experience?
2. How do these themes suggest a change in self-concept?
3. How are other individuals involved as the adolescents manage their self-identities?
4. Can self-concept change in adolescent mothers be described as following a sequence of stages?

From an analysis of the significant statements four themes were abstracted that relate to the unmarried adolescent motherhood experience:

1. Betrayal: The Loss of Trust

   a. Reference was made by the respondents to loss of relationships with significant others that usually involved a sense of being abandoned and feeling personally inadequate. As a result, feelings of decreased self-worth were evident. A positive self-concept was interpreted as being partially dependent upon being treated with positive regard by others.

2. Resentment: The Sense of Insult

   a. Resentment was a familiar theme for a number of adolescent mothers in response to the actual or threatened apprehension of their children by government social agencies. This threat was experienced by these mothers as an accusation of inadequacy and their sense of powerlessness was expressed by statements of hostility or revenge. Again, the subjects' sense of self-worth was seen to be conditionally attached to approval of their role performance by others.

3. Dawning: Recognizing Inadequacy

   a. Although feelings of resentment may continue, they were often modified by accepting a degree of self-responsibility. For this to occur a redefinition of the self was necessary in order to incorporate the knowledge of being inadequate in some areas of parenting. This process would suggest

that as their defenses weakened, some of the adolescents were able to gain insight into some previously unknown aspects of their personalities.

4. Reconstruction Phase: Engaging the Social World
   a. In this last theme, individuals took a more proactive stance and proceeded to actively engage the assistance of others in developing mothering and life skills. Those adolescents who were unable to make the transition to this stage were characterized by expressing resentment.

The unmarried adolescent motherhood experience was also interpreted in the context of a more general model of self-concept change. Five sequential stages in the model were identified and a description was offered fitting the adolescent reports to the model:

1. Change is initiated as the adolescents experienced tension between their present situation and an imagined more positive state. This occurred most significantly as a result of missing close relations with others. As the adolescents experienced feelings of loss and helplessness a degree of unhappiness would contrast with a remembered happier time or an awareness of an imagined time in the future of intimacy with another.
2. As present behavior was associated with a tendency toward a negative self-identity, the adolescents became aware of a need to change to a more desired state. For the adolescents this was observed in the resentment they

felt as individuals from social service agencies began to take action in directing their lives. Powerlessness to manage their own life situations either left the adolescent with a sense of hopelessness or perhaps more constructively led to a need to make meaningful their experience by locating targets of resentment and viewing themselves not as inadequate, which would be detrimental to their self-worth, but as victims.

3. A turning point was a common stage in self-concept change as the adolescents acknowledged the need for some behavioral or attitude change. This was interpreted as occurring as the subjects recognized that their present action, and perhaps belief system about themselves, was becoming detrimental in achieving their own goals. For a number of adolescents this came about as they saw their resentful action to being directed externally, actually increased the possibility of continued intervention by social service agencies.

4. For a change in self-concept to be promoted it was necessary that the adolescents see there was more to be gained by adopting a new line of action rather than persisting along a previous course. Regarding one's self as a mother and feeling concern about the well being of their child was significant in assisting some of the mothers to resist a less responsible lifestyle. The role of mother began to take on more positive connotations as the adolescents began to look forward to an altered

lifestyle.

5. As the adolescent mothers became further involved with the individuals from social service agencies, and with members of the parenting and life skills project, further change was promoted in changing the self-identity. Intense involvement with others was therefore interpreted as an important stage in the process of change.

The findings are supportive of some general conclusions from the literature. Unmarried adolescent mothers in this study do appear to experience a significant variation between their self-identity and their self-ideal. Purposeful and productive action is frustrated by a sense of isolation and powerlessness. The data suggests that those adolescents who had relationships with their parents characterized by much criticism and lack of affection, tended to have lower self-concepts. Given the history of lacking trust in others, these adolescents tended to be defensive and reacted to the world in general, as a competitive threatening environment. The locus of control would appear to be external to these individuals. In this study and others, the adolescents lacked coping skills, had a poorly developed sense of adequacy and were generally unhappy about their relationship with others.

In terms of promoting a positive self-concept among adolescent mothers, the findings of this study are also in agreement with other research that indicates improvement may

be gained through a program of group counselling and structured programs. Although the project setting in which the data was gathered in this study was not evaluated in terms of effectiveness, other studies would suggest that these programs are worthwhile. Most of the respondents spoke positively of the present program while giving constructive comments for change. The general impression received by this researcher was that in terms of staff-client contact, they were most desirous that the staff understand the adolescents as persons and try to put themselves in their place. This led me to believe that these adolescents were experiencing some sense of isolation and were looking for uncritical acceptance.

Finally, although there was resentment expressed toward social workers, the positive change in self-concept and attitude demonstrated by many of these young mothers suggests that while working in a professional relationship with them may be trying, the results are often worthwhile.

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